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Geographical Realities of India

by

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The materials of this essay formed the basis of three lectures delivered in the years 1953 & 1954 to the United Service Institution of India, New, Delhi. I am grateful to my friend, Mr. Eric da Costa, for his encouragement and assistance to permit of the appearance in print of the essay in the form presented here.

—C. S. VENKATACHAR

NEW DELHI
September 10, 1955.

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

'The Eastern Economist' counts itself fortunate in that it has been able to obtain Mr. C. S. Venkatachar for a spacious assessment of the geopolitical problems which surround India at the present time. An earlier pamphlet in this series "Sea Power in the Indian Ocean" No. 22 gave some indication both of the interest of this theme and the fine historical scholarship of the author. That was, however, only a preliminary canter, which demanded, and has now obtained, its fuller course.

Mr. C. S. Venkatachar, who is Secretary to the President of the Indian Union, has had a distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service. In a critical period he was Secretary of the Ministry of States. Previously in many administrative appointments, he has had to deal with many historical trends outside the usual administrative routine. His deep historical sense and his profound reading in social matters have thus stood him in good stead in his official work. It is the good fortune of 'The Eastern Economist' that it can now draw on the same abundant source.

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CHAPTER I

MACKINDER AND THE ROUND WORLD

Halford J Mackinder was the dean of British geographers. As a teacher of geography in the London School of Economics in the first decade of this century—a decade of the sharpening of Anglo-German rivalry—he noticed that the teaching of geography was taken seriously in the German high schools and universities. It was organised in the generation after Jena mainly by the labours of four men—Alexander Von Humboldt, Carl Ritter, Berghaus and Steiler—who were attached to the new University of Berlin and to the maphouse of Perthes of Gotha. Germany had many cartographers who were scholarly geographers and not merely surveyors or draftsmen and their work was appreciated by the wide public in Germany, educated to appreciate and pay for intelligently drawn maps.

Mackinder's geographical perspective led him to the view that the great wars of history were the outcome, direct or indirect, of the unequal growth of nations and that unequal growth was not wholly due to the greater genius and energy of some nations as compared with others; in large measure it was the result of uneven distribution of fertility and strategic opportunity upon the face of the globe. He said, "Unless I wholly misread the facts of geography, I would go further and say that the grouping of lands and seas and of fertility and natural pathways is such as to lend itself to the growth of empires and in the end of a single world empire." It was clear to him that we must recognise these geographical realities and that if we have to recover possession of ourselves, we should not become the mere slaves of world's geography, exploited by materialistic organizers.

Mackinder's germinal ideas were expressed in a paper on "The Geographical Pivot of History" read in 1904 before the Royal Geographical Society wherein he sketched the

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"The contrast presented by the British war against the Boers, fought 6,000 miles away across the ocean, and the war fought by Russia at a comparable distance across the land expanse of Asia, naturally suggested a parallel contrast between Vasco da Gama rounding the Cape of Good Hope on his voyage to the Indies, near the end of the fifteenth century, and the ride of Yermak, the Cossack, at the head of his horsemen, over the Ural range into Siberia early in the sixteenth century. That comparison in turn led to a review of the long succession of raids made by the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, through classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, upon the settled populations of the crescent of sub-continents; peninsular Europe, the Middle East, the *Indies, and China* proper. My conclusion was that,

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World-island and the Heartland and in an article he wrote in 1905 in the National Review on the subject of "Man-power as a measure of national and imperial strength." Shortly before his death, Mackinder gave an account of how his conceptions originally came to shape. In 1943, he wrote:

"My earliest memory of public affairs goes back to the day in September 1870 when, as a small boy who had just begun attendance at the local grammar school, I took home the news, which I had learned from a telegram affixed to the post office door, that Napoleon III and his whole army had surrendered to the Prussians at Sedan. This came as a shock to Englishmen, who still moved mentally in the wake of Trafalgar and the retreat from Moscow, but the full effect of it was not realised until some years later. Britain's supremacy on the ocean had not yet been challenged, and the only danger she saw at that time to her overseas empire was in the Asiatic position of Russia. During this period the London newspapers were quick to detect evidence of Russian intrigue in every rumor from Constantinople and in every tribal disturbance along the northwest frontier of India. British sea power and Russian land power held the centre of the international stage.

"Thirty years later, at the turn of the century, von Tirpitz began to build a German high seas fleet. I was busy at this time setting up the teaching of political and historical geography at the universities of Oxford and London, and was noting current events with a teacher's eye for generalization. The German movement meant, I saw, that the nation already possessing the greatest organised land power and occupying the central strategical position in Europe was about to add to itself sea power strong enough to neutralize British sea power. The United States was also rising steadily to the rank of a Great Power. As yet, however, its rise could be measured only in statistical tables; although in my childhood someone had already been impressed with American resourcefulness. Thus Germany and the United States came up alongside of Britain and Russia.

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view of the geographical realities is coloured for practical purposes by our pre-conceptions from the past. In other words human society is still related to the facts of geography not as they are but in no small measure as they have been approached in the course of history.

The joint continent of Europe, Asia and Africa is now effectively and not merely theoretically an island which may be designated as the World-island. One reason why the seamen did not long ago rise to the generalization implied in the expression 'World-island' is that they could not make a round voyage of it. An ice-cap—two thousand miles across—floats on the polar sea with one edge aground on the shoals off the north of Asia. For the common purposes of navigation, therefore, the continent is not an island. This fact and its vastness have made men think of the continent as though it differed from other islands in more than size. We speak of its parts as Europe, Asia and Africa in precisely the same way as we speak of the parts of the ocean as Atlantic, Pacific and Indian. This World-island ends in points of northeastward and southeastward. On a clear day you can see from the northeastern headland across Bering Strait—to the beginning of a long pair of peninsulas each measuring about one twenty-sixth of the globe which we call the Americas, but North and South America slenderly connected at Panama are for practical purposes insular rather than peninsular in regard to one another. Another continent, Australia, lies a thousand miles from the south eastern point of Asia and measures only one sixty-fifth of the surface of the globe.

These continents are in point of area merely satellites of the old continent. There is one ocean covering nine-twelfths of the globe. There is one continent the World-island covering two-twelfths of the globe; and there are many smaller islands whereof North America and South America are, for effective purposes, two, which together cover the remaining one-twelfth. The term 'New World' implies, now that we can see the realities and not merely historic appearances, a wrong perspective.

If we consider the population of the globe we find that

"At the end of the First World War, my book, "Democratic Ideals and Reality" was published in London and New York. Clearly the 'pivot' label, which had been appropriate for an academic thesis at the beginning of the century, was no longer adequate to the international situation as it emerged from that first great crisis of our world revolution: hence "Ideals," "Realities," and the "Heartland." But the fact that, even when additional criteria were brought to bear, the thesis of 1904 still sufficed as the background for an estimate of the position fifteen years later, gave confidence that the formula sought had been found."

II

The main thesis of Mackinder may be set out closely conforming to his own words.

The physical facts of geography have remained substantially the same during the 50 or 60 centuries of recorded human history. The outlines of land and water and the mountains and rivers have not altered except in detail. The influence of geographical conditions upon human activities has depended however not merely on the realities as we now know them to be and to have been, but even in greater degree on what men imagine in regard to them. The ocean has been one throughout history. The first chapter of Genesis contains the text: "God said, let the waters be gathered together in one place"; on this the American Admiral Mahan based a new message on sea power The practical meaning of the great reality of the oneness of ocean was not wholly understood until a few years ago-- perhaps it is only now being grasped in its entirety

Each century has had its own geographical perspective The geographical perspective of the 20th century differs however from that of all the previous centuries in more than a mere extension. In outline our geographical knowledge is now complete. Whether we think of the physical, economic, military or political inter-connection of things on the surface of the globe, we are now for the first time presented with a closed system To this day, however, [illegible]

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If we consider the population of the globe we find that

more than fourteen-sixteenths of all humanity live on the great continent and nearly one-sixteenth more on the closely offset islands of Britain and Japan. Even today, after four centuries of emigration, only about one-sixteenth live in the lesser continents. Nor is time likely to change these proportions materially.

On these facts Mackinder proceeds to pose the question: what if the Great Continent, the whole World-island or a large part of it, were at a future time to become a single and united base of sea power? Would not the other insular bases be out-built as regards ships and out-manned as regards seamen? He then proceeds to develop his theme of the outcome of a thousand years of organisation from the ancient to the modern conditions, of sea power. He examines the history of Egypt, Persia and of the Greek and Roman world and draws the conclusion that sea power is fundamentally a matter of appropriate bases, productive and secure. Greek sea power passed through the same phases as Egyptian river power. The end of both was the same; without the protection of a navy commerce moved securely over a water-way because all the shores were held by one and the same land power. When the entire Mediterranean was a closed sea, the Roman Empire became a land power and it terminated a cycle of competition upon the Mediterranean water by depriving the sea power of its base. His reading of the ancient and medieval history leads him to the conclusion that there is a permanent duel between land power and sea power and each tries to outflank the other. The march of Hannibal in B C 218 was for purposes of out-flanking the Roman sea power; similarly the march of Alexander the Great in B C 333 outflanked the eastern Mediterranean sea power, such also was the object of the Crusaders in the medieval periods

III

So much for the perspective from the seaman's point of view. Now let us look at the matter from the landman's point of view. The idea of the unity of the ocean beforehand merely inferred from the likeness of the tides in the

Atlantic and Indian waters suddenly became a part of the mental equipment of practical men. A similar evolution was in progress in the rapid realisation of the unity of the continent owing to modern methods of communication by land and air. The Islanders were slow in understanding what was happening. Theirs was an external view of the continent like that of the seaman who named Malabar, Coromandel and Murman Coasts. In order to appreciate the continental view we must remove our standpoint from without to within the great ring of the 'coasts.'

Accordingly we are invited to view an area which includes a greater part of Asia and Europe whose rivers flow either to the icy north or the salt lakes without an exit to the ocean. The northern edge of Asia is the inaccessible coast beset with ice except for a narrow water lane which opens here and there along the shore in the brief summer owing to the melting of the local ice formed in the winter between the grounded floes and the land. It so happens that three of the largest rivers in the world, the Lena, Yenisei and Obi stream northward through Siberia to this coast and are therefore detached for practical purposes from the general system of the ocean and river navigations. South of Siberia are other regions at least as large, drained into salt lakes having no outlet to the ocean; such are the basins of the Volga and Ural rivers flowing to the Caspian Sea and of the Oxus and the Jaxartes to the Sea of Aral. Geographers describe these inward basins as 'Continental'. Taken together the regions of Arctic and continental drainage measure nearly a half of Asia and a quarter of Europe and form a great continuous patch in the north and centre of the Continent. That whole patch extending right across from the icy flat shore of Siberia to the torrid steep coasts of Baluchistan and Persia has been inaccessible to navigation from the ocean. The opening of it by railways and by aeroplane routes constitutes a revolution in the relations of men to the larger geographical realities of the world This great region is called by Mackinder as the Heartland of the Continent. The Heartland, however, for purposes of strategical thought of Mackinder includes the Baltic Sea, the Middle and Lower Danube, the Black Sea,

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no lasting stability could be ensured. He suggested that a middle tier of States from Poland to Greece should be interposed between Germany and Russia, supported, of course, by the outer world—a view no sooner was it expressed was rendered obsolete by the decisions of the peacemakers at Versailles. Mackinder consoled himself by bequeathing to the European posterity a foot note to it:—

"My object is not, however, so much to debate certain solutions of the problems immediately confronting us, as to give concrete aspect to the general idea which I am endeavouring to build up. My purpose will still be served if it is borne in mind that what I have written on these particulars represents the outlook at Christmas, 1918."

IV

Such were the views of Mackinder which he put forward on the morrow of the first World War. By an irony of fate what was intended as a study in the politics of reconstruction of democratic society was developed on strange lines by the German School of Geopolitics under the inspiration of its founder Haushofer. Fates were indeed malevolent to the subject known by the German name of Geopolitic. The basic ideas were twisted and perverted from its original thought. Round the original principles of Mackinder have grown a mushroom of false ideals on history and human geography and a spurious literature on Geopolitics. Mackinder is in no way responsible for such intellectual perversities. His perspective centred round mainly round two ideas; space and strategical opportunities which physical geography conferred was the pivot of history of a people or a race and man power was a measure of physical and national strength of a country—both tremendous realities shifting the balance in the constant duel between land power and sea power in favour of the former. Mackinder also seriously questioned the assumption of the Islanders of the inevitability of sea power, warning them that organization in space, and of man-power by the Continentals spelt the doom of the Islanders and their sea-power, and what was more serious the destruction of their democratic way of life.

Asia Minor, Rumania, Persia, Tibet and Mongolia. This Heartland is a region to which under modern conditions sea power can be refused access.

It is evident, argues Mackinder, that the Heartland is as real a physical fact within the World-island as is the World-island itself within the ocean although its boundaries are not so clearly defined. The facts of geography remain and offer ever-increasing strategical opportunities to land power as against sea power.

Mackinder examines certain aspects of the 19th Century European history in terms of what he calls the 'Rivalry of Empires' and puts forward the proposition that there is a permanent duel between East and West Europe, the former based on land power and the Heartland and the latter on sea power. He divides Europe into East and West by a line so drawn from the Adriatic to the North Sea, that Venice and the Netherlands may lie to the West and across that part of Germany which has been German from the beginning of European history but so that Berlin and Vienna are to the east, for Prussia and Austria are countries which Germans conquered and more or less forcibly Teutonized. On the map of Europe thus divided he says: "Let us think through the history of the last four generations, it will assume a new coherency." His conclusion is that the World-island and the Heartland are the final geographical realities in regard to land power and that the East Europe is essentially a part of the Heartland. This leads to the oft-repeated maxim associated with his name:

"Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland:
Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:
Who rules the World-Island commands the world."

Here the main thesis of Mackinder ends. The rest of his essay deals with the freedom of nations and the freedom of men and how to secure them. He conveys a warning to the idealists of the western world that any trench-line between the German powers and Russia would have the effect of leaving the German and Slav in dual rivalry and

V

Mackinder's conception of Heartland exercised an alluring influence over Hitlerite Germany which derived the gospel of living space from it as well as the strategical inspiration for the Heartland as an area not accessible to sea power and its organisation into an impregnable fortress of a powerful land power from which naval counter threats could be organized against sea power. This would then bring about the collapse of America which was only a small island in comparison to the greater world island consisting of the land areas of Europe, Asia and Africa. As against this line of thought propounded by Mackinder three considerations may be set out. Firstly, Mackinder thinking in the maritime age could not have brought into reckoning the potentialities of air power which he thought was an ally of land power. This is by no means conclusive. He had no prevision of the atomic power. Without going into the merits of the relative balance of air power in the hands of either land power or sea power, all that can be ventured is that it is not the final and decisive ally of land power. Secondly, Mackinder perhaps over-exaggerated the capacity of landsman to organize naval power if he overran the land areas on the sea margins. Sea power is based on certain national characteristics. It is not possible to imagine that all people on the land surface would become effective masters of this particular instrument of power. Thirdly, there is the lesson from the old story of the fight between Goliath and David. Size may be very impressive, but the contents of power are not always in proportion to size. Size alone will not confer an absolute superiority. Smaller areas may have other attributes, material, moral and spiritual which may tip the balance.

As regards space, Mackinder himself drew attention with perspicacity to the existence of what he called the 'mantel of vacancies', a girdle, as it were, hung around the North polar regions. It begins as the Sahara desert and follows Arabian, Tibetan and Mongolian deserts and then extends by way of the wildernesses of Lenaland, Alaska and the Laurentian shield of Canada to the sub-arid belt of

These somewhat novel ideas of Mackinder attracted little attention in Western Europe. European political thought was firmly rooted in the principle of the balance of power whose relation to the new perspective of the balancing of areas and populations was not quite apparent. The West European mind was not unduly obsessed by vastness of territory or teeming populations. It was saturated with the Helleno-Roman culture. The greatness of the Greeks lay neither in space nor in numbers. Europe did not realise till the end of the Second World War that the attack on West would come from within Europe; the West always looked for counter attack from the East. It feared more the recovery of the Asian and other suppressed people than the quarrel among the Europeans in Europe.

Mackinder set out his principles from a West European foreground. He had the foresight to see the rivalry between the Teuton and the Slav. Teutonic Germany had no space in the centre of Europe. Russia had a vast hinterland in Asia. If Germany were to acquire space in Eastern Europe and Russia, she would control a vast land mass and as an Islander, Mackinder feared that the sea bases in Western Europe would be threatened by the enormous power of the Continentals. Hence Mackinder's proposition that the Teuton and the Slav should be separated by interposing between them an effective barrier — a system of three tier states in Eastern Europe which with the exception of Greece and Yugoslavia are at present included in the Soviet bloc.

His conception of the duel between sea and land power and also the duel between Eastern and Western Europe are both tremendous historical realities. History is replete with instances of attempted outflanking of sea and land power and the lessons of history cannot be ignored The Persian Xerxes; the Carthaginian Hannibal; the Christian crusaders of the Middle ages; and the European conquerors of the 19th and 20th centuries — all attempted to outflank sea power. The Romans in the 1st and 2nd century A.D and the Portuguese in the 15th century outflanked land power by the discovery of new trade routes in pursuit of economic power.

themselves final and decisive. Happen what may, the world will stubbornly refuse to balance itself on a mere mechanistic conception of space and population.

Finally, Mackinder's broad and brilliant generalizations suffer from two shortcomings. He failed to draw correct inferences from the unity of the Eurasian Continental land mass in the pre-Maritime Age of world history. He committed the same mistake as the mariners did in viewing the continent from the coast line. To them the Island was friendly; the Continent was the enemy. Failing to realise the significance and the realities of this unity he presumed that the storm against the West which apparently in his language meant the West European Christendom, always gathered and broke out in the interior of the Heartland which became the seat for permanent aggression against the West. Mackinder also failed to appreciate the movement of the nomads on the Eurasian Steppe and consequently the vital distinction between the Steppe and the Sown. Before the pre-maritime age the antithesis between Europe and Asia had no meaning. To understand the course of events before the western mariners sailed over the seas, we must have a clearer perception of the traffic in civilization along the Eurasian land mass. To this theme we may turn our attention in the next Chapter.

Western United States. That girdle of deserts and wildernesses is a feature of first importance in global geography. It constitutes practically a continuous land space covering 12 million sq. miles, that is about a quarter of the land on the globe. Upon this vast area there live today a total population of less than 30 millions, that is, one-seventieth of the population of the globe. Outside America this girdle has constituted a break in the social continuity between major communities of mankind and at the same time has played a decisive part in the history of world civilization.

The question of space and Heartland has consequently to be viewed in relation to Mackinder's own conception of these enormous land vacancies. Our conception of Europe and Asia should be in relation to this geographical reality. There are also other vacancies in the world which should be reckoned though not at the present time. There are the spaces of tropical rain-forests of South Africa and South America sparsely inhabited by the present population. If these were subdued to agriculture and inhabited with the present density of tropical Java, they might well sustain in course of time even a thousand million people.

The European perspective has to adjust itself to large areas and populations. Its evolution has been through small areas and sparse populations; for example, the area of the Greek world, that is to say, the area where Greek thought and life practised was considerably smaller. The male adult population of Attica of which Athens was the capital was not more than 45,000. This tradition of the Greco-Roman world was carried on by city states of Italy. At the end of the mediaeval period of European history these city states were over-shadowed by the rise of nation-states on the Atlantic sea board. In the mid-20th century the Western European nation-states have been over-shadowed by the emergence of China, India, Russia and America—countries with huge space and large populations. It is somewhat too late in the day to be afraid of space and manpower of different areas. The freedom of men and the freedom of nations will have to be controlled by the Spirit of man; none of the physical features are by

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Toynbee has recently suggested a clue to the thesis "that the conflict between Hellenism and Oriental Civilizations was a feud between 'Europe' and 'Asia' ". He writes: "The ghost of an erroneous Hellenic theory had been effectively discredited by the logic of events returned to haunt a modern Western world . . . . The modern Westerners who adopted and adapted the Hellenic mariner's geographical terminology, were the peoples of the eastern shores of the Atlantic . . . . On the oceanic chart drawn by Western *navigators* in a modern age of Western history, '*Europe*' meant the hinterland of the mariners own home ports from Cadiz to Helsingfors; 'Asia' meant the hinterland of another chain of ports from Muscat to Nagasaki.... but the modern Western *geographers* entangled themselves in the intellectual and *moral coils*, they had caught their Hellenic *predecessors* when they set themselves to give the continents a cultural, as well as a nautical, meaning." (A Study of History—Vol. VIII—719-723).

II

In an unbiased schema of the European and Asian civilizations which make up world history, there is place for only three areas of civilization—China, India and the Greco-Roman world. Each of these has spread civilization to its natural surroundings and adjacent areas. Europe is the natural heir to the Greco-Roman world. In Asia it is not the totality of the *vacant spaces* which matters; what counts is the civilization of China and India.

Before 1500 A.D. the overall life of Europe, India and China had reached a uniform level of civilization. In antiquity East and West freely borrowed cultural forms; without prejudice or mutual antagonism they peacefully took part in the traffic in civilization. The transformation which such exchanges brought about *in different* human

CHAPTER II

EUROPE AND ASIA

I

Europe has shown greater awareness of the existence of Asia than Asia has of Europe. A prying curiosity towards Asia or the quest for silk from far-off Cathay and spices from the Indies — whatever the cause or pretext — Europe's contact with Asia commences from the earliest times of recorded history. Yet, it is paradox in the relation between West and East that Europe has simultaneously been attracted and repelled by Asia.

The Asian mind is also puzzled as to what led to the development of an eternal antithesis between the West and the East. This antithesis has been changing shape and at different periods of European civilization it has taken a sharp attitude of antagonism such as the Western world and Islam; Europe and Asia and again Europe and the Near, the Middle and the Far East. One often wonders whether the western mind has been built up out of an inner polarity of the Orient and the Occident. This antithesis is not just a passing prejudice or a fleeting fancy. It is embedded in the spirit of Europe carrying an element of conflict within it, the conflict being more pronounced when the West became cognizant of its own innate superiority.

Intriguing too is the shift in the geographical and cultural frontiers between Europe and Asia. Readers of Eothen may remember that Charles Kinglake writing in 1844 considered that he was entering the East when he ferried across the River Save to Belgrade. In the preceding century another Englishman, Lord Elphinstone, felt that a European might believe himself to be still in Europe till he reached the Indus, a view coloured by the historical belief in the 18th century Europe that China and India had reached an advanced stage in their downward path. A French scholar — R. Guenon — —in a study of the relationship between Europe and Asia has claimed, in determining

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Admirable as are the above views of West European humanism we may still have to look for the original divergence to the influence of Christianity in moulding habits, thought and spirit. Christianity is the main axis of Europe's history. Christianity has one very distinctive characteristic which distinguishes it fundamentally from the religions of Asia. As a religion it was a revolutionary movement, born of Jewish mendicants; it gradually extinguished the pagan culture of Rome and judaized the whole Europe. This poor and humble religion (to quote Gibbon) which gradually insinuated itself into the minds of men grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition and finally erected the triumphant banner of Cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Christianity became decisive for Europe not only spiritually but politically as well.

In antiquity — that world of humanity — there was free exchange of cultural forms between East and West. Then came the break between antiquity and western Christendom. Europe started its new career with the "clarity of opposites, the lucidity of spiritual conflicts." Wars henceforth became religious wars. The Church split into two and brought about the division of Europe into east and west. The seeds of the European schism were therefore sown at the time when the Greco-Roman world broke up. The European spirit since then became a house divided against itself. The two world wars of the twentieth century revealed the ghastly rent in the seamless garment of the European spirit. Here in these words is the spiritual but not the geographical definition of Europe: "What is Europe?" A thought which is never satisfied. Without self-pity she never ceases her pursuit of two quests, one towards happiness, the other which is even more indispensable to her and more dear, towards truth. She has scarcely found an estate which corresponds to its double requirement, when she became aware, when she knows, that as yet she only holds with an insecure grip something temporary and relative: and she returns to the desperate search which is her glory and her torment."

From the wars of religion Europe shifted to wars of ideas and ideologies. Europe, in particular Western Europe, re-

societies were not imposed by an external state authority. In the pre-maritime age of nomadic eruption where the nomads traversed tracks of ancient civilization, there they became the carriers of culture and cultural forms which they diffused and dispersed along the paths of their movements. Where they traversed the vacancies of Eurasian land mass, they transplanted culture from one region to another. The Arabs who spread over the Fertile Crescent are in instance of the former phenomenon; the Mongols of the 13th century illustrate the latter.

The contact between Europe and Asia was intermittent but it was a balanced relationship. All this changed in the few centuries following the Age of Discovery of the Western mariners. In the maritime age the contacts between Europe and Asia became closer but at the same time the divergence in their relations became wider and the antagonism between the West and the East sharper and more embittered. Strongly dominated by the conception of the universality of its mission over the non-European parts of the world, the West developed a typical self-sufficiency in viewing the alien world as a mere curiosity.

European scholars and thinkers derive their ideas of divergence between the West and the East from what they consider to be the more fundamental causes. There is a presumption that the Helleno-Roman culture has a residuary superiority over all other cultures, not because of its western origin, but because of its very distinctive qualities of mind and spirit. The West alone has developed ideas of political liberty. The Western mind which has shaped the world finds its assurance within the world and not outside it. The Greek world gave birth to the ideas and principles of liberty which came into being nowhere else except in the West. The land masses of China and India with self-sufficient economy are sharply contrasted with the Western urge for commerce and trade, the spirit of discovery; of scientific thought; restless energy of the Western people and the part played by rationality and individual liberty in the development of democratic spirit and institutions. These and many other considerations they hold have endowed the West with faculties for reshaping the world.

In this mid-twentieth century which is a great watershed in the historical relations between Europe and Asia we can see how false have been the prophets of history, and how out of focus has been the vision of the modern West European whose home—the West European Coastland—is only a promontory of the Asiatic land mass. Yet the tendency of the West is to view Asia and the Asians from a vivid West European foreground against a very dim Eastern background. The Asian peoples, their history and civilizations are more often an appendage to the furious if somewhat misguided activities of the West Europeans in their rapid spread over the world in the last few centuries. "Asia," said a character in one of the stories of Kipling, "is not going to be civilized after the methods of the west. There is too much Asia and she is too old." After the disposal of Asia in such manner, Europe comforted herself with the words of Hegel which seemed to confirm: "The Europeans have sailed round the world and for them it is the sphere. Whatever has not fallen under their sway is either not worth the trouble or it is destined to fall under it." How unreal are these words written at the peak of western dominance at the end of the nineteenth century! What intellectual myopia bedevilled the West!

III

Viewed from the Asian standpoint, space and population convey a different meaning; there the geographical factors are correlated with the continuity of civilization. Indeed, the history of India and China proves that the civilizations of these two countries survived on account of their space and dense population. Mackinder believed that the attack on the West and Mediterranean world was organized from Heartland though the attack came from the vacant spaces which had no reservoir of man power.

'Think through' history on a plane of broad generalization and witness the two main streams of traffic in civilization in the history of the peoples of Europe and Asia, the earlier of which is from East to West on land and the more recent from West to East on the sea. The great divide between these two streams of traffic is the maritime age ushered in

newed itself by changes, but every such change represented a violent break with the past. There was much attendant conflict and suffering and a great tension arose in the European soul. The split in the spirit of Europe is the most important underlying cause of the rivalries of the western people. The task of western civilization is primarily to unify the European spirit and not forcibly westernize the world. The split in the spirit of Europe coincides with the geographical and hence the strategical division of Europe between East and West. The result is that eastern Europe has barricaded the progress of western cosmopolitan liberalism, abandoned truth, and edified the glory of the State. East Europe attempted to overthrow the West for realising world salvation and world power. The spirit of man is eternal and the civilizations of India and China, though often accused of having neglected the material side of life, pinned their faith in the ultimate triumph of man's spirit. Mackinder's geopolitical idea arises out of aggression and exploitation of strategic ideas by unscrupulous organisers of society with a 'ways and means mind'. Should not the answer to this be, that Europe should recover her soul and put an end to the schism in her historic spirit?

Unlike Europe, China and India continued to live in continuity with their own past with which there has been no violent break. Religion has played a great part in shaping the mind and spirit of the Asian peoples. But it never was an instrument of political and social revolution. On an overall consideration there is a deep-seated difference between the religious feelings of the continents of Europe and Asia. But it did not mean that out of their own matrix China and India have not slowly and imperceptibly changed themselves during the last three thousand years. There might not have been those sudden jumps and those great spurts of violent activity which go by the name of revolution in certain epochs of European history. China and India have not failed to emerge and break through their past, for had they not done so, their civilisations would not have survived. Ultimately it is the capacity to break through which is the test of survival.

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tween the Ural Mountains and the Caspian Sea. The grass zone bends south and continues eastward over the lower level of the Mongolian upland. Then it passes through Altai and Tian Shan Mountains in a narrow gap with the Gobi desert to the south of it and ends at the less detached grass land of a part of Manchuria. This is the longest open passage or corridor in the world. This passage faces India and China and has a system of the mightiest and the most massive barriers in the world. The large population of China and India lies round the eastern and southern slopes of these mighty barriers which include the Himalayas, the Tibetan Plateau, the Karakoram, the Hindukush and the Tian Shan. These barriers have deflected the traffic of civilization to India and China, and the deflected traffics have found their way into India and China in each case through two highways. The Mongolian upland is lower than Tibet and from that area one can reach the province of Kansu in China and to the great city of Sian and the other directly southward from Lake Baikal to Pekin. Similarly in India these massive heights slope down to the Iranian upland from which two passages lead to North-Western India—one through the Kabul Valley to the plains of the Punjab and the other through the Bolan Gorge to the regions of the lower Indus.

Let us clear the long ribbon of the Eurasian Steppe of its modern railways and cornfields; locate within it three great land-marks of history:—(a) the Steppe and the Sown; (b) a Great Wall; and (c) broad tracks or routes of movement and people the area—again in imagination with the restless moving nomads—the Scythians, the Sarmatians, the Cimmerians, the Sakas, the Yue-chis, Huns, Hunas or Hiung-Nu—the horse-riding Tartars—Turks and Mongols—these and other related mobile hordes who from time to time in the course of history fell like a devastating avalanche on the settled agricultural peoples of Asia and Europe.

IV

The distinction between Europe and Asia simply did not exist prior to the Maritime Age. Where we are dealing

by the western mariners from the fifteenth century onwards. The two traffics, though in opposite directions, are historically continuous and convey far better meaning than what the West would have the East to believe by providing a wholly western perspective to the more recent movement of the western people and by characterising the earlier movement on land from east to west as an aggression committed by the Orientals against the Occidentals.

In such a conception we will have to read the history of a country related always to the main traffic so as to get a picture which is not static or set in slow motion. No practical idea can be grasped statically. We must come to it with a momentum of thought and that can be done by viewing the history of a country in relation to the main traffic of civilization.

Let us unrol a map and view the geographical scene of this great traffic in civilization. Let us for a moment treat the whole of Asia, Africa and Europe as one land area and divide this solid space into four or five zones. India, China and the Islands of Indies can be one zone; we can call it the Monsoon Land. There is a vast land area from the Pacific to the Baltic; it may be called Eur-Asian land mass. Western Europe, the Mediterranean and the adjacent islands appear from the Asiatic end as a promontory of this vast land mass; we can call it the European Coastland. There is a land bridge between Asia and Africa which we may call Arabia or the Fertile Crescent. There is the desert region of Sahara from the Atlantic to the Nile. Below the Sahara there is the vast continental area of Africa.

Let us scan the map a little more for details. We see that there is a region of vast forests from the north of Germany through the Arctic region of North Russia extending to the whole of Siberia. Below the southern border of forested area lies a vast open ground, a luscious prairie, and as you move southward the aridity increases and the sparse grass becomes more sparse. This whole grass land —rich and poor—is called the Steppe. The Steppe starts from the centre of Europe, passes through southern Russia and enters Asia through the gateway, namely, the gap be-

very meagre. The Aryans were an exceptionally gifted people. Many of their tales were mythical or unreliable legends but always with a substratum of truth, though legendary and historical characters are much confused. Barring the Aryans most of the nomads of history were rude and unlettered people. They came under the observation of the civilized peoples of the Sown as soon as the nomads made a nuisance of themselves. With the Greek Herodotous, the Achemaenian Darius, the historiographers of China and the historical tradition of India as guides, we are enabled to peep through chinks of history into the corridor of the Eurasian Steppe and identify the settlements of the nomads from the Black Sea to Mongolia. A modern western scholar—G. F. Hudson—has plotted these settlements and detailed the traffic in civilization in his classical study of the contact of the West with China. His study restores perspective to the devastatingly broad sweep of generalizations made by Mackinder.

A brief "close-up" view of the tenants of the Steppe corridor may precede an examination of the traffic routes. In certain periods of their history the nomads are peaceful; at any rate the civilized people do not hear of them. As a pastoral people the nomads are mobile and their mobility is due to their having tamed the horse in some remote period of antiquity. On the grass lands they follow pastures and travel long distances. If they happen to quarrel among themselves, weaker sections of them get pushed along the open corridor. Whenever their activities are less warlike they infiltrate into settled agricultural areas as settlers and get absorbed in the local agricultural population. Possessed of a poor material culture they are first dazzled and subsequently tamed by the higher culture and civilization of the settled people.

Nomadic movement has been explained by various plausible and pseudo-scientific theories, such as the "desire for change;" "love of adventure;" "progressive or cyclical desiccation of the Gobi desert and the Steppe region;" "over-population among the nomads" and so on. These theories generally are the outcome of a long line of study by Western scholars on the causes of the collapse of the Roman

with the wanderings of people it is absurd to think in terms of the present day physical or cultural boundaries. The nomads of the Eurasian Steppe would never have known whether they belonged to Asia or Europe. The only recognisable and therefore valid distinction is that between the Steppe and the Sown. The geography of the Eurasian Steppe has been sketched earlier. The Sown par excellence are the agricultural empires and ancient civilizations of India and China. There are other smaller areas represented by the civilizations on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris, of the Nile in Egypt and the closely affiliated areas of Iran and the Syriac world, the latter bordering upon the Eastern Mediterranean, furrowed deep by very ancient tracks of fertility and civilization into which have poured camelmen from the Steppes of Arabia, horsemen from the European Steppe and sea-rovers from the islands and shores of the Mediterranean.

From the dawn of history the direction of the nomadic movement has been from the Steppe to the Sown, and as long as nomadism existed the gravitation pull following the laws of Nature was exerted towards the agricultural and settled peoples. The earliest of these wanderings is that of the Indo-European people who were supposed to have wandered away from some region on the Eurasian Steppe to Iran, India, the Aegean and Italy. A section of them known as the Aryans have handed down tradition of their wanderings which is to be gleaned from the Avesta. It is said that these Aryans once lived in a country to the north of Iran. There the Power of Evil made their land ice-bound and uninhabitable and the Aryans moved southwards round about the country under their modern names of Bokhara and Merv. Plagued by locusts and harassed and driven by hostile tribes they again moved towards the country round Balkh. Thereafter these wanderers split into two groups—one part going to modern Herat and the other to Kabul. These groups again divided first into tribes that occupied Archosia, Helmand and Hapt-hindu or the Punjab. The tribes which settled in the Punjab are known as the Aryan invaders of India.

Our knowledge of the wanderings of the nomads is

Last in order comes that world conqueror Genghis. The entire wealth of the Mongols like that of their ancestors, the Huns, consisted in their flocks with which they migrated in search of pastures and water holes. Genghis's hegemony over the Turko-Mongol tribes and Mongolia was the prelude to his attack on China and conquest of the world.

Such were the men, the most dreaded of the neighbours to the Chinese peasants of the marches in the northern parts of Hopei, Shanshi and Shenshi.

It is apparent in this context that the Great Wall of China is not a mere historical curiosity. A supreme task of the early rulers of China was to stop the incursions of the nomadic hordes from the Mongolian Steppe. From time to time stretches of the Wall were built in an attempt to hold back the hordes. When the Great Wall was strengthened and adequately garrisoned it fulfilled its purpose from the military point so long as there was a strong rule in the northern plains of China and the empires there were not ephemeral. There is an acute observation made by Owen Lattimore that the Great Wall was also intended to check the coalescence of the Chinese with nomadic groups as much as to keep the nomads out of China. Military measures, diplomacy and the Chinese philosophy about the non-coalescence of the Steppe and the Sown constituted in conjunction with the Great Wall an effective barrage against the nomadic floods, and the working of this barrage was such as to turn the nomadic flood movements westward and set in motion strong transmission of impulses in the open corridor. This happened whenever the nomadic hordes were unable to swarm through the Great Wall over North China.

The outward expansion of the Central Asian nomads from the Heartland in the shape of incursions of the Huns, the Turks and the Mongols was a normal movement and expansion of population; by no means was it a storm directed principally or primarily against Europe. The primary correlation is between nomadism and the Chinese civilization from which follow the historical consequences of the pro-

Imperial age; their observation is parallaxical since they view at the terminal end the traffic reckoned from Asia to Europe. To appreciate and understand the factors at work the examination of the problem should appropriately begin at the Chinese world—the point of origin of the great traffic. To the Europeans the nomads were a dreaded bugbear; to the Chinese they were their most immediate neighbours since in the Chinese world the Steppe and the Sown lay in close juxtaposition.

The Mongolian Steppe in which is to be included the parts of Mongolia situated to the north of eastern Gobi called outer Mongolia and the grass lands of inner Mongolia, was for long a great reservoir of the nomadic hordes. The first in order of history to share the Steppe were the Huns. To quote Rene Grousset, "These nomad herdsmen whose flocks constituted their sole riches migrated with their animals in search of fresh pastures pitching and striking their temporary encampments of felt yurt as they went . . . . old Chinese annals portray them as perfect barbarians; their heads are too big; their features undefined but their eyes like burning coal; they have massive chests framed to withstand the icy nights and scorching days of the Gobi desert and their legs are bowed from constant riding."

In the middle of the sixth century A.D. another important development took place in Mongolia. This was the foundation of the Turkish Empire. The Turks make their debut in history and they were probably a branch of the Hun tribes originating from outer Mongolia. After becoming masters of the whole of Mongolia the Turks in 565 A.D. extended their possessions in what is known as Soviet Turkistan (Tashkent, Samarkand and Bokhara), at the expense of another Mongolian horde—the white Huns. The Turks controlled higher Asia from the Great Wall of China to the frontiers of Iran and this immense area was divided and ruled by two branches of the Turkish clan The Eastern Khanate ruled over Mongolia; the Western Turks held sway over Turkistan and ruled from Issyk Kul—an important place in the corridor. The former waged war against the Chinese; the latter against Sassanid Iran.

to Lobnor in the East. Starting from Kashgar in the north lie the Oases of Kucha, Karashar and Turfan group; in the south, again going from Kashgar are Yarkand, Khotan and Miron, the last situated on the approaches of Lobnor.

The establishment of Chinese protectorate over the Tarim Basin between A.D. 123 and 127 has a considerable bearing on the history and civilisation of the ancient world. Across the Tarim Basin two routes were opened up, the north route by way of Lobnor, Karashar, Kucha and Kashgar, and the south route by way of Lobnor, Khotan, Yarkand and Kashgar. The road with its two routes across the Tarim Basin was the famous Silk Road.

The whole route falls into four sections, two of which lie in the open corridor of the Eurasian Steppe and the other two in the Fertile Crescent. These are (a) the stretch from the Chinese frontier to Kashgar, (b) from Kashgar to Merv, with two forks from Kashgar, one of which went over into Ferghana and then through Samarkand to Merv and the other from Kashgar to Balkh and then to Merv, (c) from Merv to Seleucia and (d) from Seleucia to the frontier of the Roman world.

We may now follow the traffic along the route. The movement of the nomads into Europe followed the broad open passage or grass land lying to the north of the trade route—the so-called broad Scythian way—north of the Caspian. Along this passage rode the Huns under Attila with the main direction of the nomadic flood passing through Asiatic gateway to Europe. There was nothing to stop the Huns till the Carpathians were reached at the end of the Hungarian plains. From Hungary the Huns raided in three directions, northwestward they disturbed the Germanic tribes; penetrated into Gaul westward, and southward, they invaded Italy as far as Milan, destroying the Roman cities of Aquilea and Padua. During the first half of the sixth century a branch of the Huns appearing for the first time under the name of Turks revolted against their erstwhile masters the Avars (Jou-jan) - the Mongolian hordes who were the masters of Gobi and outer Mongolia. Driven out of Mongolia by the Turks, a section of these Avars fled to

tracted duel between the Steppe and the Sown. It should be remembered that Europe for long intervals had attained a stationary state in the mediaeval periods of European history in the corresponding periods of which the Central Asian people were exercising their scope for expansion. In particular, should be noted that historical event in the Chinese history when in B.C. 35 the Chinese took a bold step in bringing about schism among the Huns in Mongolia by diplomatic and military measures and arrested expansion of the Huns westwards and "incidentally, doubtless saved Europe for more than four centuries," for "it was not until the year A.D. 347 that these Huns regrouped around the family of Attila and started once more on their conquering march against the Germanic and Roman world." Not until the thirteenth century did Europe again feel the weight of attack from the Steppe in the shape of the Mongolian invasions. Here again China took off a great weight of attack on Europe by making Genghis's grandson, Kubilai, the great Ruler of China.

So much about the two great historical landmarks, the Great Wall and the barbarians of the Steppe. The third is the road connecting the Chinese world. Its starting point is the Province of Kansu. From Kansu's capital, Lanchow to the northwest, runs a corridor in which was manifested the famous trade route of antiquity, the old Silk Road. This way passes through a series of oases, formed by the melting snows of the Nan-Shan; consequently it deflected through northwest China and the Jade Gate into the Tarim Basin. The Jade Gate was the scene of successive migrations and invasions into China such as was the case of the Khyber Pass into India. The Tarim Basin lay on the highway between China on the one side and India, Iran and the Mediterranean world on the other. It was a nodal point on the caravan route, and the two great military powers, the nomadic Huns from the heights of the Mongolian uplands and the Chinese from the frontier marches of Kansu, claimed to control it. *The Tarim Basin is surrounded by two semi-circles of mountains, the arc of Tien Shan on the North and the arc of Pamirs in the South, and included within it is a chain of oases spaced out from Kashgar in the West*

to Lobnor in the East. Starting from Kashgar in the north lie the Oases of Kucha, Karashar and Turfan group; in the south, again going from Kashgar are Yarkand, Khotan and Miron, the last situated on the approaches of Lobnor.

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Europe and established a Khanate in Hungary against whom the Christian Charlemagne made war. The Avars and later the Magyar Turks were converted into Christianity in A.D. 1000 and were utilised as barriers against the further inroads of the Tatar tribes. It is traffic of this kind of which Mackinder has complained in these words: "When we reflect that through several centuries of the dark ages....the horse-riding Turks form Asia raided into the very heart of the Christian Peninsula when it was clasped by hostile sea power (of the Norse Pagan and the Moorish and Saracen infidels) we have some idea of the pounding as between pestle and mortar. The pestle was land power from the Heartland." Mackinder forgets that these horse-riders of history were stateless nomads who neither made nor understood any distinction between the civilized peoples of Asia or Europe.

The barbarian uneasiness over the Scythian way to Europe is not of a startling consequence inspite of the horrors conjured up by modern West, for if a due sense of proportion were to be observed the barbarians only traversed vacancies of the land mass till they came to the out-posts of Western Christendom; a miserably contracted small world in comparison to the civilized areas of Asia and the Fertile Crescent. On the other hand, the movement of the nomads from the uplands of Mongolia into the interior areas of the trade routes of Asia across which their settlements straddled and from which they harassed the civilized life of the ancient world, and the political and social effect of that encounter with the civilizations of India, Iran and the Mediterranean world were of utmost consequence and significance.

The prolonged duel between the Turko-Mongolian hordes and the Chinese Empire is a great chapter in the history of the people of China. We are not concerned here with the details of this vast subject and the great achievements against the nomads in the Han and the Tang periods of Chinese history except to add a meagre footnote of an observation that in the long run the installation of the nomads in the heart of an ancient agricultural country like China must have caused incalculable damage and an expres-

sion of sympathy with the woes and sufferings of the Chinese peasant about which a Chinese poet wrote in 752 A.D:

"Have you ever seen
By the Kokonor
From ages past the whitened bones no kinsmen gather home?

. . . .
Sad, sad, the soldiers leave their native land ;
They are going beyond Turfan
Where the most of misfortune awaits them
When will men be satisfied with building a wall against the barbarians?
When will the soldiers return to their native land."

It is China and not the far distant European Coastland which had to bear the brunt of the nomadic onslaught. What of India and the Fertile Crescent? We located the Tarim Basin as a potential traffic centre for the Chinese world. India's destiny was moulded by a traffic "roundabout" located on the highway in the Oxus-Jaxartes Basin from which routes out to the Euphrates and the Tigris via Iranian Plateau; to the plains of Northern India over the Hindukosh; to the Tarim Basin via Kashgar and to the adjacent Eurasian Steppe and to the regions of Caspian Sea and the Aral. Thanks to the Himalayas and the roof of the Tibetan world, the nomadic stream was forced to this 'roundabout' from which it distributed itself in different directions of a compass. Between the Sown of the Gangetic Plain and the Steppe in the Oxus-Jaxartes Basin lies the great divide of the Hindukosh. Normally the mountain shield of the Himalayas and the Hindukosh functioned by cutting off the main nomadic stream from the northwestern regions of India. It was invariably a very small element which pierced the Hindukosh and thrust itself into the Gangetic Valley. In this sense India did not lie on the direct march of the nomads and neither did India have, unlike China, an area immediately contiguous to the Steppe. Consequently a great portion of the nomadic stream which collected in the Oxus-Jaxartes Basin was diverted by the traffic roundabout only to descend cascade-like over the

Iranian uplands into the Fertile Crescent where a second roundabout close to the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean dispersed and distributed the traffic. To this roundabout in the Mediterranean area converged roads from the Nile Basin, from the Arabian Steppe, from the Tigris and the Euphrates Basin and from the Anatolian Uplands. In contrast with India these areas lay directly on the march of the nomads from two directions, one from the Steppe of Arabia and the other from the Eurasian Steppe. Culturally, ethnically and politically the Fertile Crescent was pulverized by the pounding attacks of the nomads, delivered by the primitive Arabs under the banner of Islam, the Mongols under Hulagu, and the Seljuk and the Osman Ali Turks.

Nomadism was not an organised movement of people, it followed no known phenomenon of cause and effect. *Intermittent and irregular, it was of the nature of transmis*sion of impulses. For long periods, uneasy silence would *prevail in the Corridor. Suddenly it would be filled with* the din and activity of the marching and tramping of men and horses, *led by war bands and then followed by an un*expected relapse into a state of luxurious lull. But the traffic in civilization did not come to an end; along the ancient tracks and highways cultural migrations pursued their course not all of which were interfered with.

The nomads could not have been left in a state of perpetual motion and mobility. Their destiny was either to be absorbed by the higher civilization or in the alternative their societies had to be transformed into civilised ones under the aegis and the tutelage of the advanced civilizations of the Sown. Those who escaped this inevitable process were condemned to exist in desolate isolation as mummified societies in some remote and uninhabitable regions of the earth. India and China with their ancient civilization and traditional societies were cast into the role of tamers and civilizers of the nomadic society. They were the shock absorbers for recurrent nomadic eruptions. The nomadic attack was not launched by any organized state, nor was it organized warfare. It was a head-on collision with the Sown, ending with the coalescence of the peoples of the Steppe and the Sown. The Huns did not destroy

the Roman Empire; the barbarians became part of it. China was not destroyed by the Mongols; they became part of the Chinese civilization.

The inter-relation of the Steppe and the Sown has yet to be re-assessed from the Asian standpoint. The Western view of the nomadic phase of Asian history is refracted through the medium of the politics of Islam which aggressively and defiantly confronted Western Christendom during the dark days of medieval Europe.

The expansion of Arabian Islam into Central Asia is the turning point in the history of Eurasian Steppe nomads and marks an epochal change in the relations of Asia and Europe. Till then, the nomads were outside the pale of the great religions of the world. They toyed with this or that faith, with the same curiosity with which they amused themselves with the material objects they looted from civilized areas they constantly raided. But the prize for the conversion of the nomads was there awaiting Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, Mahayanian Buddhism and other faiths which journeyed on the traffic highway — all these had their chance of converting the nomads. They were all relentlessly swept away by the whirlwind of Islam, perhaps the nomads themselves had little choice in the matter of their conversion. They were sucked into the whirlpool of the mighty force coming over from the Arabian Steppe.

Barbarian nomadic society was amorphous. Except for its passion for destruction, it did not know what it was destroying. It was fired by no evangelical spirit. It fought for no Faith nor a Cause nor a Creed. There was no conflict of cultures or of religious faith. Nomadism hovered above; underneath it art, civilization and culture flourished. Consider, for example, the flourishing of Buddhist civilization in the Tarim Basin. The height of glory of this area was about the time when the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Chang passed through on his way to India. The arts of the Tarim Basin were decorated by many cultural forms [illegible]
tctly [illegible]
a sma [illegible]

phy and Sanskrit culture were as strong in Sinkiang as it was in North India. The western Turks were ruling over this part. The ruler at that time is well-known because of his description by the Chinese pilgrim who in the extract to follow is referred to as Tripitika. At Issyk-kul (the present-day Kirghiz Republic) the pilgrim met "the Khan of the western Turks who had come there on a hunting expedition. He wore a green silk gown. His head was bare save for a silken fillet that bound his forehead and hung down to the ground. Two hundred captains stood round him, all in robes of brocade and with plaited hair. The Turks were fire-worshippers. At dinner grape juice was tactfully provided for Tripitika (all Buddhists — both of Mahayana and Hinayana—were forbidden to drink wine), and afterwards the Khan asked for a sermon. Thinking no doubt that a philosophical theme would be too difficult for the Turks to understand, he began with the Ten Commandments. He then went on to speak of Release through Higher Wisdom. The Khan smote his head with his hand, in sign of delighted acceptance of Tripitika's teachings," 'I should not go to Indika,' he said afterwards (this is what the Turks called India) 'it is very hot there. I should think by the *look of you that you would simply melt away*'. *But when* Tripitika rejected his advice the Khan gave him a young man who had spent some years in China and was a good linguist to accompany him to Afghanistan."

Or again a later picture of the Mongols who professed crude Shamanism. The picture is from the European end. In 1245 the Pope sent the Franciscan John de Plano Carpini to the court of the great Khan of the Mongols. Carpini arrived at the imperial camp in time to see the ceremonies at the election of the Great Khan-designate. It was held in a huge pavilion of velvet. "The Mongol Rulers had not yet begun to live in built houses ; they held their courts in great tents and frequently moved camp from one site to another ; yet in these camps in the wind-swept wilderness of the Steppe the magnates arrayed themselves with a magnificence suitable to warriors who had plundered without restraint from Korea to Silesia. They wore the costliest furs, vair and fox, ermine and sable, with velvet and

silver brocades; they displayed an abundance of gold and gems not only on themselves, on their tents but also in the trappings of their horses." The Tatars were little interested in the prospect of the spiritual submission to the Apostolic See.

The fate of the nomads in Central Asia or at least of Turkistan was decided in A.D. 751 when an Arab force assisted by Turkish auxiliaries defeated the Chinese. From that event the western part of Central Asia became Moslem. The Arabs had destroyed the Sassanid Empire in 652 and extended their conquests into Trans-Oxiana after imposing their suzerainty on the kings of Bokhara and Samarkand. They reached in 714 Tashkant and penetrated into Ferghana. With the help of Turkish tribes who were friendly to China, the Chinese empire under the Tangs pushed back the Arabian thrust, only to yield ground to Islam within the next half a century. Nomadic society, contiguous to China, gradually came under the influence of Lamaistic Buddhism and slowly sank into insignificance and decadence by the seventeenth century. Its western counterpart was transformed into an Islamic society. Nomadism lingered on into the Maritime Age when a cultured nomad, Babar, founded the Moghul dynasty in India, twenty-five years after Vasco da Gama had rounded the Cape, and in China, a century later when the semi-barbaric Manchus ascended the throne at Pekin replacing the Mings.

The effect of Islamisation of the nomads was profound. Islam coagulated their amorphous society into a solid body with a very hard core. Islam bestowed a spirit of zeal for a cause. The converts to Islam became the fiercest crusaders for their new Faith. Islam also gave a strong protective armour to withstand attacks of other religions and to repel any insidious attempts to undermine the faith of the believer. Islamised nomadic marauders and aggressors, under the militant banner of Islam, were able to dominate populous areas of ancient civilizations and rule over highly civilized races with great vigour and strength which their unproselityzed forbears were unable to achieve. Only China had not to encounter the aggression of Islamised nomads. No more was the nomadic attack an

avalanche; it was a mighty pressure exercised by kingdoms ruled by Islamised nomads who relentlessly pounded Hinduism on the banks of the Ganges and fought and dominated, as Sacarcens and Osman Ali Turks, the Christian nations of Europe.

The onslaught of the nomads did not lead to the collapse of the highly stable societies of India and China. Modifications were no doubt made in their internal social structure. On the other hand, the Mediterranean world could not survive the shock of the barbarian attack. The political shape of Europe was altered. The axis of power shifted from the Mediterranean to North Europe. Unlike the land masses of India and China, the Mediterranean world was a small area and it was politically fragmented. The people inhabiting the European Coastland, to which the main energies of the European people were now shifted, felt that they were cabined and confined in a narrow space. For long they had to tolerate the attack of the barbarians. They had to struggle to save their nascent Christianity from the attacks of the infidels. The marshy lands of Eastern and Central Europe had to be drained and populated. The Moscovite Russians had to shake off the stranglehold of the Tartars, holding sway over them from the banks of the Volga. In these areas modern civilized societies were a much later growth. Islamic landpower like a double-headed eagle barred the movement of the Christians to the Asian parts of the world then known. Last of all, the Mongols delivered hammer-blows on Eastern Europe. The pressure exercised in the rear from the Eurasian landmass on the West European Coastland and its people, an unknown and unchartered sea in front, the need for trade and commerce and economic expansion—all these contributed to the release of the hidden springs of energy of the western people and led to the extension of the power of the European people over the seas.

The highway of traffic changed over from land to sea with the direction reversed from West to East. The diffusion of the higher elements of culture and the part they played in the development of modern societies was accomplished mainly by movements on land, though movement o

waterways need not wholly be excluded. Higher religions were also diffused along land routes. Christianity spread over the whole of Europe by land; so did Mahayana Buddhism which travelled on the hazardous Silk Road from India to China. A twofold change came over the corridor. The Mongols had opened the land route and imposed pax tatarica. The movement on the ocean outflanked the Islamic land powers which had blocked the entrance between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. The great Central Asian land routes fell into disuse. Islam and the desert smothered whatever life was left in the great corridor. Just as the land empires were outflanked by sea routes, the nomadic homeland itself was outflanked by the Cossacks who stealthily moved through the vast Siberian forests and reached the Pacific. Later, the Cossack horsemen rode into the Steppe which they began to police, to be followed in the nineteenth century by the coming of the iron rail road. The expansion of China and Russia, two great land powers, finally put a seal on the doom and extinction of Eurasian Steppe nomadism.

The new movement on the sea from the sixteenth century onwards differed from its predecessor on land in character and consequence in fundamental ways. Small ships acquired great mobility over the landsmen. The movement on the sea was organized by the newly emerged national states on the West European Coastland. These national societies were backed by economic power—a thing unknown to the world of the nomads. The new movement was carried over two forks; one stream went to the empty spaces which were peopled in the course of a few centuries by emigrants from Europe—principally the Americas and Australia; the other fork carried sea power which encompassed the political and economic domination of the populous areas of the non-European parts of the world having sea-frontages. The West acquired a preponderating power and superiority of a magnitude hitherto unknown.

The dominance of the West over the non-European parts of the world principally rested on Sea-power, reinforced in the nineteenth century by industrial power. The balance of power titled overwhelmingly in favour of

avalanche; it was a mighty pressure exercised by kingdoms ruled by Islamised nomads who relentlessly pounded Hinduism on the banks of the Ganges and fought and dominated, as Sacarcens and Osman Ali Turks, the Christian nations of Europe.

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ubiquitous. Britain used sea power in a very deft manner in close association with skilled diplomacy. Throughout the nineteenth century there were many wars in Europe and Asia as a result of the rivalries among the European states. They were localized and a cordon sanitaire drawn so as to prevent conflict from penetrating into the strategic theatres which meant the oceanic regions. This localization of conflict amongst the European powers gave them added strength for the pursuit of their imperialistic activities in Asia and Africa. The pattern of the duel between sea and land power was accordingly set out. Witness the two world wars in the twentieth century which were direct attempts to straddle across sea power from Continental land base.

Britain's sea power enveloped three-fourths of the world putting out conflicts on the waters. On the seas there was the effective voice of only one nation. A view from the oceanic side unfolded the nature of the duel on land. The ambition of Napoleon to unite Europe is the starting point of this duel. Napoleon tried to unify Europe from the West. He told his captors in St. Helena: "I wanted to unite all peoples into one strong national body. When this was done people could devote themselves to the realisation of their dream. Then there would be no more vicissitudes to fear, for there would be one set of laws, one kind of opinion, one view, one interest, the interest of mankind." In this enterprise he was baulked by Britain. The three countries of Eastern Europe, Russia, Austria and Prussia were brought in to defeat the attempt of Napoleon to dominate Europe just as in the twentieth century the new world had to be brought in to redress the balance in the old.

After the defeat of Napoleon the duel was taken up by East Europe. Russia had to be found a place in the system of European balance of power if a civil war had to be avoided in Europe. Russia then started probing for strategical possessions as a land power. In this career her European ally was Prussia before the latter united Germany into a powerful state. Three times Britain intervened in support of Turkey, not for any love for Turkey but to

the West European Coastland. Hilaire Belloc shrewdly observed:

"Whatever happens, we have got
The Maxim Gun which they have not."

Read 'we' for the West Europeans and 'they' for the 'non-Europeans' peoples of the world. Power based on the European Coastland had astonishingly immobilised the rest of the landmass of Mackinder's World-island.

The Indian Ocean Basin was the strategic theatre for the exercise of sea power. The Indian Ocean, unlike the Atlantic and the Pacific, is embayed ; accordingly it presents two special features. Its entrance and exit routes have to be guarded and protected both from sea and land. The pivotal area for such protection is India. During the first two and a half centuries of Europe's contact with Asia and Africa the rival European powers were contending for the command of the seas and their activities had not penetrated deep into the interior of the Asian and African countries. Seapower was effectively felt after the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Industrialization and democracy were both held as an explosive mixture in the container of nationalism. This development in Europe started the rivalries amongst the European States in the nineteenth century and the duel between the two parts of Europe, that is the East and the West.

The projection of the Continental duel on to the seas was not apparent and remained unnoticed throughout the nineteenth century. There is a reason for this. The development of sea power owed its initiative to England and to her favourable position as an island base. English imperialism accepted the new conception of several contending States, making due allowance for the balancing of different national interests. Balance of power became a major factor in international relations. England's maritime expansion was not based on the glorification of the state power. The exercises of sea power was however spectacular. It appeared to be awe-inspiring, all-pervasive and inescapable. It could put on a "squeeze" over territories from a petty desert Sheikhdom to the Celestial Empire. It was

accentuated, pressure exercised with greater aggressiveness and the strategical ambitions pursued under the guise of ideological warfare. At present the forces based on land and sea power are so poised that the slightest displacement in any part of the world will have the effect of immediately precipitating a global conflict.

contain Russia and prevent the extension of her power into the strategical theatres of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Whenever Russia's ambition was thwarted in Europe, she moved into the vast vacant spaces of Central Asia and of Siberia. That was her answer to the challenge of the maritime powers. To assist the duel two power lines emanated from Europe: one on land, the other on sea. The latter ran through the front door of the non-European world. Russian land power which now penetrated the open corridor—for long the home of the nomads—passed through the back door to the Asian countries. The people at the front door were sensitive to the knocking of the intruder at the back door. All this was not quite apparent in the nineteenth century, though England on account of her hold on India was always jittery over the intentions of the Cossack horsemen on the Steppe of Central Asia.

The rivalry of empires in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is explicable in terms of conflict arising out of the split in the two parts of Europe, the East and the West. Russia's failure to exploit her strategical opportunity made her anti-West and the driving power of her state was derived from Slavophilism under the Czars and Marxism after the October Revolution of 1917. The year 1878 marks a further stage in the accentuation of the duel between the East and the West now taken up with greater strength and earnestness by Germany. Unlike Russia, Germany did not have a vast hinterland of space. She utilized her great skill in organization, technique of science and industrialization in building up her manpower for the pursuit of antagonism towards the West. The policy of Bismarckian Germany was to weaken the West and to make Germany one of the most virile nations of the world, a bulwark against West European ideas. "Such a return of the past," says an English historian, was a European calamity on a scale so vast that the meaning could not be realised at the time." Germany twice attempted to overthrow the West with disastrous results to herself and to the world.

The picture we have therefore is that the contests of the nineteenth century have continued into the twentieth century very much in the same form with the rivalries

the religious and the Faith. That is why Buddha was not born there. The mind of the people is narrow and their coarseness profound, hence neither saints nor sages go there. The climate is cold and the country rugged.' "

"The master of the law replied, "Buddha established his doctrine so that it might be diffused to all lands. Who would wish to enjoy it alone and to forget those who are not yet enlightened? Besides, in my country the magistrates are clothed with dignity and the laws are everywhere respected; humanity and justice are highly esteemed and old men and sages are held in honour . . . . How can you say that Buddha did not go to my country because of its insignificance?' "

Yet it would not be wholly correct to say that India's mind was completely impervious to all external contacts. There have been phases in India's history when lively interest was evinced in her neighbours — near and far. There were episodes rather than a continuous process. It is not easy to explain the waxing and waning of this national tendency. Possibly it may be due to disturbed conditions in Indian society resulting in too much preoccupations with internal consolidation accompanied by the withdrawal of the gaze from outwards, and partly to the innate conservatism of a populous, self-sufficient country of peasant culture with no urge for trade and commerce with distant countries. Though Hinduism and Buddhism spread far and wide particularly in Southeast Asia it was not the result of the organized effort of ardent missionaries or by state authority. Politics, commerce and religion played an insignificant part in activising the passive attitude towards India's neighbours. India has meant for her neighbours than the neighbours have meant for India. She has been a lodestar for the ambitions of people with predatory instincts, and from the peaceful ones she has earned respect and regard. But whether peaceful or warlike, they have failed to impress her mind and rouse her interest.

While considering who were the neighbours who in the past mattered, we may take note of the fact that the attitude towards neighbours was conditioned by the differ-

CHAPTER III

INDIA AND HER NEIGHBOURS

The Indian Ocean and the high Himalayas have effectively isolated India and barred easy movements from without. This has made the Indian mind largely isolationist. Indian isolationism has been accentuated by three other characteristics — wholly Indian. Indian society has always been continental ; until recent times there had been little mobility of movement even from region to region. India's vast spaces have the effect of imprisoning the minds of her people ; little interest is evinced beyond the vast internal horizons. The outer geographical framework of India was permanently fixed by Nature ; at times the expansionist ambitions of an outsider may have resulted in the nibbling of small fringes of territory in the northwest or the northeast regions of India. Such temporary shiftings of frontier in the remotest parts were inconsequential events in India's long history. The energy of everyone — indigene or the foreigner — was fully extended in reaching up to the limits set by geography and there was no need to look at India's neighbours with greed or envy or covet any part of a neighbour's territory. India's pacific intentions were mainly dictated by this, apart from any philosophic detachment. Thirdly, Hinduism as a religion is exclusively confined to its own territorial limits and has no extra-territorial affiliations unlike Christianity and Islam. Hinduism has been responsible for political incapacity and pragmatic indifference to the existence of neighbours. When the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Chang decided to return home after his sojourn in India it is reported : "The Monks of Nalanda, when they heard of it begged him to remain, saying, 'India is the land of Buddha's birth, and though he has left the world, there are still many traces of him. What greater happiness could there be than to visit them in turn, to adore him and chant his praises? Why then do you wish to leave, having come so far? Moreover, China is a country of 'Mlecchas', of unimportant barbarians, who despised

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more difficult routes. Alexander (328 B.C.) and Timur (A.D. 1398) crossed by the Khawak pass (11,640 feet) and Babar (A.D. 1504) by the Qipchak pass (13,900 feet). All these descended into the Valley of the Kabul river and followed a more direct route to Kabul itself.

The geopolitical problem on either side of the Hindukush was to 'abolish' this divide. This abolition depended upon quiescence on the part of the nomads in the open corridor and the existence of a strong northern Indian empire. There have been periods in Indian history when, from the Indian end, the Hindukush was effectively abolished such as by Asoka and by the Moghuls, till the later Moghuls lost by stages their hold on Trans-Oxiana. At other times, even in the absence of a strong central government in the North, Indian occupation extended up to the Kabul Valley so long as there were no counter-threats from across north of the Hindukush. This state of affairs prevailed in the ninth and tenth century of the North Indian history before the Islamic onslaught began. On other occasions the divide was abolished by the movement of nomads, but their safety lay in securing lodgement either on the southern slopes of the Hindukush or in the Peshawar Valley, if not into the plains of Delhi. The capital of Kanishka's Central Asian empire was in Peshawar. Earlier, the Bactrian Greeks who had occupied the Kabul Valley ruled the north-western parts of India. Generally, a movement to the north of the Hindukush caused no seismic tremor in the plains of the Punjab; when the southern slope of the Hindukush was occupied then the security of the northern Indian plains was definitely threatened. This principle of Indian geo-politics has often been illustrated. The Mongols who swept across the corridor and scourged the greater part of Asia and Europe in the thirteenth century did not cross over the Hindukush and swoop down upon the north western regions of India. India remained unmolested by the Mongol world-conqueror. When Babar was fighting for his patrimony in Farghana his activity was not felt in India. As soon as he crossed the Hindukush and consolidated his power in the Kabul Valley his mastery over India came within practicable range.

ing characteristics of the North and South Indian mind. Northerners imprisoned in the vast spaces in the plain and shut off from the Himalayas developed a 'closed' mind. By contrast the peninsular people on India's coastal areas had their gaze seawards and had had a long tradition of migration across the seas to the countries adjacent to India.

In the pre-maritime age India, rather than the plains of the north of India, had contact with the nomads of Central Asia through the Hindukush 'divide' and that contact was regulated by a traffic roundabout in the Oxus-Jaxartes Basin. What was India's response to the constant movement of traffic into India from this area? Indian attitude was one of complacency. India was content to tackle the intruders as they came and after the entrance to India had been pierced and they had set foot on Indian territory. No serious thought was given to the problem of the distant mountainous frontiers. Physical barriers may be static but the working of the minds of men behind them is not; it is the men and ideas behind the barriers which matter. Physical geography generally acts as a challenge; it had a contrary effect on India and did not create a dynamic thought on the politico-military problems of the Hindukush.

The regulatory function of the traffic roundabout was such that at any given time it would permit only a small element of migratory stream to pierce the Hindukush. There is the six-hundred mile stretch of the Hindukush from the borders of Chitral to Herat. All the accessible passes from the northern slopes of the mountain to the Kabul Valley cross the main ridge along a line of about 150 miles, of which the centre is about 60 miles due north of Kabul and the main routes from all of them converge on to the Kabul plateau. From Balkh, the vicinity of our roundabout — the earlier routes crossed the Hindukush at Nil pass or the AK Robat Pass. Both routes converge on the Bamiyan Valley from where a principal route in Buddhist times descended into the Ghorband Valley. Hsuan-Chang followed this route in the seventh century. This was the highway for the peaceful Buddhist pilgrims, caravan traffic and cultural missionaries. The great conquerors who came to the Punjab followed shorter and

more difficult routes. Alexander (328 B.C.) and Timur (A.D. 1393) crossed by the Khawak pass (11,640 feet) and Babar (A.D. 1504) by the Qipchak pass (13,900 feet). All these descended into the Valley of the Kabul river and followed a more direct route to Kabul itself.

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India's neighbours across the mountain barriers were not civilized states and kingdoms but nomads who were brought into relationship with her over the Hindukush mainly as a result of the conflict between the Siberian wind-swept Steppe and the Chinese Sown. Long before this conflict started, of which we have some recorded history, we have an earlier glimpse of the Eurasian Steppe nomads — some hordes of them had, like locusts, settled in the Punjab plains. Historians think there was a nomadic eruption from the Eurasian Steppe in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. The universal state of Darius had to deal with these troublesome neighbours in the area in which we are concerned — the Oxus-Jaxartes basin. The Persians knew one branch of the Saka nomads who were their allies, another their nominal subjects. The Greek Herodotous was aware that Darius had annexed a small fringe of territory bordering on the Indus — possibly up to Multan and the lower Indus up to the sea-board. Beyond, in the interior was a great and populous country, for Herodotous speaks of India as by far 'the largest nation in the world'. The Sanskrit term Bahlika must be presumed to be a generic term to cover the Eurasian nomad peoples, including not only the Bactrians proper (Bhallas), but also, Malavas, Kshudrakas, Madda, Madraka, Kamboja and what not—names preserved in the later Indian historical traditions. These swarms were in the Punjab and beyond, waiting to be legitimized by Hinduism according to Vedic orthodoxy.

There followed a peaceful interlude till a Chinese Caesar arose to deal with the nomads who were menacing North China. The Chinese took vigorous steps for outflanking the powers of the Huns. The Han Emperor Wu-Ti ordered an investigation into the state of the open corridor by his envoy, Chang-Chien. This envoy discovered that the Huns had driven a horde called Yuechi who had moved towards Ferghana and in doing so, they had pushed a people known to Indian history as Sakas settled in the corridor somewhere between Jaxartes and Lake Issyk-Kul. The Yuechis were not interested in getting involved with the more ferocious Huns. They moved nearer the traffic

roundabout and displaced the Bactrian Greeks who were ruling in the area north of the Hindukush. The displaced Greeks moved south to the Kabul Valley, soon to succumb to the still southward moving Yuechis. The Yuechi hordes figure in Indian history as the Indo-Scythians whose great ruler was Kanishka. Having successfully abolished the Hindukush divide, Kanishka held sway over a great part of the north Indian plains. The more docile Sakas had to get round the Hindukush at Herat; they proceeded to Baluchistan from whence they drifted to Western India and Gujerate. The Hindukush tapers out and ceases to be a barrier at Herat; here the Hindukush can be outflanked by an easy movement. It is for this reason that the nineteenth century Rulers of the British Indian Empire were frightened by the name Herat and by its threatened outflanking by the Iranians or the Russians.

The Han rulers of China had a firm grip over the Huns who had for a time become the tractable auxiliaries of the Chinese. Some of the Hun hordes driven away by the Chinese moved on to Oxus-Jaxartes basin. There were at least four branches of the Huns whose exact affiliation is obscure. The fourth century A.D. witnessed the eruption of the Huns over Asia and Europe. Attila's men went to attack Europe on the Scythian broadway. The White Huns harassed the Persians from 420 to 557. A branch of the Huns passed through the traffic roundabout and attacked the Gupta Empire in India about A.D. 455. The collapse of Persian resistance enabled the hordes to swarm into India. In the middle of the sixth century the Huns on the Oxus were overthrown by the Turks and the Hun marauder Mihiragula was overthrown by a local Indian ruler.

Tai-Tsung, the great ruler of the Tang dynasty, successfully broke up the hegemony of the Turks from Mongolia to the Aral Sea. Grousset quotes from a Turkish inscription: "The sons of the Turkish nobility became slaves of the Chinese people. They submitted to the Chinese Khagan and surrendered their empire and their institutions.' This was one of the periods of quiescence in the corridor. The

traffic roundabout continued to divert small streams of nomads — not all fiercely warlike as the Huns, possibly more peaceful — the hordes of Gurjaras, Maitrakas and the rest; these, according to Vincent Smith, had been converted into Rajput clans and into the Hindu castes of Gujars, Ahirs, Jats and others.

Indian civilization dealt with two types of nomadic movements. By far the more frequent was the folk migration of peaceful pastorals who were absorbed into the Hindu fold; the other established its political rule in the southern slopes of the Hindukush and often became a menace to the Gangetic Sown. These nomads were either overthrown or were thoroughly Indianized. Whether they were peaceful or were marauders like the Islamized Turks, Indian conditions were such that in either case the stream that entered India cut itself away from the main traffic of civilization in Central Asia. Even when the marauders established principalities and became local rulers they were Indian rulers with no external affiliation. They stood or fell depending on their own resources and fortune within India. India captured them and then "closed" their mind.

India dealt with the nomads with a profound passivity as a local problem and not as an external problem. These troublesome neighbours who harassed India off and on for one thousand five hundred years were disregarded with masterly inactivity; they were considered at best a nuisance and at worst a temporary menace. India was once and for all rid of their menace when the Russian and the Chinese empires advanced into the open corridor.

II

If Indian attitude was static across the mountains, it was more dynamic—only for a time—across the seas. Here Indian physical geography was, unlike the formidable Himalayan barriers, of assistance. The roof on the top of the Indian world could never be the highway The natural exit out of India is by sea. Nomadism and north Indian history created an inverted view of Indian history and

India's contact with her neighbours. The shutters and windows for India's exterior were located in peninsular India; only India chose, for some time, to close them and turn her gaze inwards.

On the western sea-board of India three points of contact with the Fertile Crescent and the Mediterranean world manifested themselves from the first century B.C. The northernmost point was located somewhere near the present-day Karachi. The middle point was in Western India, the principal port being the present-day Broach. The third focal point was the Malabar Coast. The northernmost point named by ancient geographers, Barbaricon, has vanished into the mists of the past. Ships coming to this port from Egypt simply coasted round the southern coast of Arabia and Baluchistan. This port came into use for trade between India and Rome via Egypt before the discovery of monsoon winds or when the silk route was disturbed by the movement of the nomads. The discovery of the monsoon winds made it unnecessary to hug on to the coast, and a great frequency of voyages across the Arabian Sea as well as to the Bay of Bengal and further on to the Indies became possible.. If Barbaricon was active as the port for the northwest regions of India, the ancient port of Barygaza (Broach) was the outlet from the midlands of the north and the central parts of India to the Roman world. On the Malabar Coast was developed the great entrepot trade between the far-eastern world and the Mediterranean, and the traffic on this maritime road remained uninterrupted for nearly one thousand five hundred years. It was the maritime counterpart of the Silk Road on land and bridged across the seas, two continents. The land route was famous for silk; the maritime for spice. The continuity of the maritime route was maintained by the early discovery of the monsoon winds, by the development of hardy sea-going and sea-worthy vessels, by the development of the science of navigation and by the energy, adventure, and intrepidity of the mariners of the Indian Ocean Basin. There have been no more daring mariners than the pre-Islamic people of southern Arabia, and they were the most successful middle-men in the Greco-Roman world handling

the maritime traffic across the Indian Ocean. India's commercial and political interests were limited towards the West. The Arabian bridge-head fell under the influence of Persians and the Mediterranean world. India had lively contact with this area and exchanged goods and commodities, but there was little active colonization.

It is on her eastern sea-board that India developed more intimate contact with the societies in farther India. Here the Andaman and the Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Islands of the Indies made voyages more easy and frequent. Colonization was developed, followed by a strong drift of a prolific variety of Indian cultural forms. Indian migration was in volume very small; there was no alteration in the basic population structure of the indigenous societies. Indian culture was not intrusive. Indian cultural contact was to the benefit of the people and assisted the development of the local national form of culture. India made a precious gift of her discovery of alphabets to these areas; if China had consented to accept this philological equipment its written character would have lost its terror. India's services to the south eastern Asian people included also the conferring on them of a strong protective cultural armour, later enabling them to resist the inroads of the westerners in the Maritime Age. These societies, small in population and confined to deltaic areas, did not go under western impact as did the civilization of Mexico and Peru. Lying between India and China the independence of the southeast Asians was not threatened by any expansionist ambitions of their two powerful neighbours. India and China never attempted to have a common frontier at the expense of the people of farther India.

The voyages across the seas were the reverse of the activities of the nomads in the land. Indian population was not transplanted; there was no forcible coalescence of cultures, no breaking up of local societies and no conflict. Higher elements of culture were integrated with the pre-existing culture forms by the people themselves. There was no desert nor the fervour of a militant religion like Islam to smother the life of those societies. India withdrew her

contact with them somewhat abruptly, but they had reached a stage when they could develop on their own lines even though they lost all contact with a country which had exercised no form of imperialism over them.

For strange reasons India chose to forget the existence of these neighbours. The political vacuum created by this forgetfulness — a somnolent period of Indian history — was filled in by a peaceful Arabian interlude. Mackinder wrote of the Saracen sea-power :

"But the Saracens were not content with a dominion based only on the means of mobility proper to their Steppes and deserts ; like their predecessors, the Phoenicians and Shebans, they took to the Sea........ eastward from Yemen, at the mouth of the Red Sea and from Oman, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, they sailed on the summer monsoon to the Malabar Coast of India and even to the far off Malay Islands and returned home on the winter monsoon. Thus the Arab dhows sketched out a sea-empire, extending from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Straits of Malacca, from the Atlantic Gate to the Pacific Gate."

He considered this vast Saracen design suffered from one fatal fact ; it lacked manpower in its Arabian base to make it good and cautioned against losing sight of this warning given by history.

Would it not however be more correct to say that the nomads had no sea sense, they only used the waterways to get across ? The idea of developing power on the seas was a legitimate discovery of the west Europeans. The Saracens and the Turks while fighting the Christians on land made ineffective naval thrusts in the eastern Mediterranean, with the object of capturing a few islands, the strong-hold of the Christians. There is little evidence of sea-power as a weapon in the hands of Islamic rulers. Two instances appear to attest this view. From the *decline of* the Hindu influence to the entry of western powers into the Indian Ocean the Arabs were peaceful traders. Islam spread to Indonesia in a perfectly peaceful manner. The Ottoman Turks no doubt gloried in their title of the 'Khakans of the Two Seas'; they were really more for-

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"But the Saracens were not content with a dominion based only on the means of mobility proper to their Steppes and deserts; like their predecessors, the Phoenicians and Shebans, they took to the Sea........ eastward from Yemen, at the mouth of the Red Sea and from Oman, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, they sailed on the summer monsoon to the Malabar Coast of India and even to the far off Malay Islands and returned home on the winter monsoon. Thus the Arab dhows sketched out a sea-empire, extending from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Straits of Malacca, from the Atlantic Gate to the Pacific Gate."

He considered this vast Saracen design suffered from one fatal fact; it lacked manpower in its Arabian base to make it good and cautioned against losing sight of this warning given by history.

Would it not however be more correct to say that the nomads had no sea sense, they only used the waterways to get across? The idea of developing power on the seas was a legitimate discovery of the west Europeans. The Saracens and the Turks while fighting the Christians on land made ineffective naval thrusts in the eastern Mediterranean, with the object of capturing a few islands, the strong-hold of the Christians. There is little evidence of sea-power as a weapon in the hands of Islamic rulers. Two instances appear to attest this view. From the decline of the Hindu influence to the entry of western powers into the Indian Ocean the Arabs were peaceful traders. Islam spread to Indonesia in a perfectly peaceful manner. The Ottoman Turks no doubt gloried in their title of the 'Khakans of the Two Seas'; they were really more for-

midable at Constantinople as the Ghazi-i-Rum. Had the Turks any recognition of the importance of sea-power, they would have turned their attention to the Indian Ocean when the Portuguese outflanked their land power, took them by the rear and intrigued with the Safavid Rulers of Persia and obtained a foothold at the head of the Persian Gulf.

III

On the eve of the Maritime Age India was in a state of isolation in relation to her neighbours. She had lost temporarily all knowledge of the exterior world; only at the extreme tip of the peninsular south the maritime traffic continued.

A new power pattern was developed by the western powers who broke into the Indian Ocean basin. As life in the land corridor was hushed into silence, the Indian Ocean was transformed into an arena of conflict. Vasco da Gama was a great geo-politician of the Indian Ocean basin. He secured all the keys to the entrances which were later seized by the British. The British organized India as a land power and turned it into a hub of a new system of security and defence. This organization was from the sea and not from land — a fact which often escaped the notice of the Anglo-Indian administrators of the nineteenth century. The new system of power pattern was grouped around India. There were three concentric zones, the first of which were 'soft' attached areas such as Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and possibly Afghanistan. Then came the ring of states such as Iran, Arabia, Tibet and for sometime even parts of Sinkiang. The third and the outermost circle represented the line of India's 'interest' now fixed on one side on the maritime route from eastern Mediterranean through the Middle-East to the Indian Ocean and on the other side, on Indo-China and Indonesia. In such a strategic conception the term 'neighbours of India' acquired an entirely new meaning. The historical neighbouring areas of India remained the same as in the pre-maritime age. The area contiguous to India became potential threats to the safety of India for reasons which lay altogether out-

side Asia. The neighbourhood of these areas to India attained a new significance because of the rivalry of the European powers in Europe. "Except for the sake of Indian security", asks an English writer, "what interests would Great Britain have had in the Persian Gulf, Tibet or Sinkiang?" British power had to be extended far beyond the borders of India so as to meet the threat from Europe into the Indian Ocean. To protect the maritime route to the Indian Ocean, India's neighbours had to be defended. The empire had no doubt to be defended not on Indian but upon Britain's needs in the West. This changed pattern had no correspondence to the one time activities of the nomads in the neighbourhood of India.

Let us look again at the state of India's neighbours with the decline of the western dominance in Asia and in the light of changed and changing contexts of power pattern. The stateless nomads have disappeared ; no longer will they harass from the backyards of Central Asia, the Islamic lands, the Hindus of the north Indian plains and the Chinese in the Yellow River Basin. The areas tenanted by the nomads have been occupied by two mighty land powers with contiguous frontier and common political ideologies.

The European conflict during the nineteenth century which extended to the non-European parts of the world assumed the form of rivalry of empires: in the mid-twentieth century the European conflict is ideological. The fight today is not much over the marginal lands : it is over the minds of men. What over-hangs the high Himalayas is not the threat of the advance of arms but the march of ideas. When the nomads overran the Gangetic plains, India had not to defend the Empire of her mind, she had to admit some socially undesirables into the folds of her civilization. The rulers of India in the nineteenth century had to defend a far away land empire based on sea-power against the advances of Cossack horsemen following in the wake of the rail road on the Central Asian Steppe. Today the empire of her mind rests on the strength of her own ideology, her social and political structure and on the consolidation of her basic fundamental unity.

But, unlike the past, India cannot afford to have a closed mind or an indifferent attitude to the happenings across the high Himalayas; she has to be watchful. Likewise her neighbours across the seas are no mere curiosities or play-things of intermittent intrests. Their friendship, their well-being and their independence are matters of paramount importance. In the colonial phase of the contact of the southeast Asian societies significant upsets came about in their placid social and economic life. The working of the labour and economic policies of the western colonial powers converted South Asian territories into offshoots of India and China. The fruit of these past policies is seen in the existence of plural societies, in the conflict between the indigene and the migrant people where the acquisitive instinct of the latter operates to the detriment of the interests and welfare of the former and in the creation of a new class of unassimilable population with attendant racial complications. China and India have survived both the barbarian attacks and the western dominance in the maritime age. The southeast Asian countries, thanks to their cultural armour, have also survived and some have already become independent; others are in the process of shaking off their colonial masters.

The renewal of India's contact in the Age of Freedom will bring into prominence three main tendencies. In the context of the present-day political world India's contact with the southeast Asian countries may have to take the form of close economic and maritime ties. Secondly, the national societies of the Burmese, the Thais, the Cambodians, the Laotians, the Anamites, the peninsular Malays and the Indonesians should be assured of their survival with unfettered opportunities for full growth and stature, unimpeded in any manner by the intrusive presence in their midst of migrant population. Thirdly, that excellent principle of the past that India should never attempt to have a common frontier with China at the sacrifice of the independence of the people of southeast Asia should be a fixed and unalterable policy.

'He would be a short-sighted Commander who merely manned his ramparts in India and did not look beyond,' so

said Lord Curzon when India was conceived as a fortress in an Imperial Defence System. Today India is a fortress for democracy and peace. It is no less essential for her to man her ramparts and constantly look beyond. This she has to do in response to her geography and strategic position. One lesson of her past history she has to unlearn and that is to be indifferent to her neighbours.

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CHAPTER IV

THE UNITY OF INDIA

Geographically, India is one. No other area of continental dimension has such strategic significance as geographical India. The outer geographical framework of India was permanently fixed by Nature. This has given unity to India but within it there have been free play of internal forces giving rise to linguistic and ethnic diversities.

What promotes or hinders India's unity is an internal and not an external problem. The historical angle on this matter has been most obtuse. For this Western Imperialism is the real culprit and it must bear a large share of blame. In its understandable anxiety to perpetuate Western dominance, it presented a picture of the terrifying invasions along the traditional routes to India through the Khyber Pass and the unending prostrations of a helpless India before the invaders. It became an obsession to view India and the problems of her unity from the Khyber. To obtain a balanced perspective of India's unity, the most intelligent way would be to view the North from the tip of the peninsular South.

Peninsular India below the Narbada consists of a central tableland from which is isolated the western coastal littoral area. The eastern coast-land is deltaic in character. The rivers which have their sources on the Western Ghats flow through the tableland, descend to the low lying coastal regions and discharge into the sea. An important feature of Indian physical geography is the Vindhyan Range in the central regions which divides the North and the South and from the remote past till modern times the Vindhyan system proved an effective barrier of separation between the two areas. The North, that is the historic plains of Hindustan, is a vast stretch of unrelieved monotonous alluvium, completely encircled, in its northern boundaries for over 1500 miles, by the majestic Himalayas and watered by the rivers of the Indus and the Gangetic systems.

These characteristics of Indian physical geography have their homologue in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. The north Indian plain with its river systems has its counterpart in the Yellow River basin of North China which is the cradle of Chinese civilization. The deltaic regions of the eastern parts of India may be compared with corresponding regions of South-East Asia. The latter have rice growing basins, deltas and irrigated dry zones. The lower reaches of the Irrawady, the Menam and the Mekong have been the bases of organised kingdoms and higher up in the wilder mountains and dense forests live hill men pursuing their primitive life. Similar is the case in the Assam hills, the upper reaches of the Mahanadi and the hilly portions of the east coast of India.

The lie of the axis of the higher range of the mountains and the direction of the flow of the rivers have determined the regions for the growth and development of civilization in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. Very early in the history of the Indian civilization three great political divisions were mapped out. The Indus Valley lies close to the mountain orifices through which passage was easy for the movement of small streams of nomads and military adventurers. This valley lay open to the political and cultural influences from Central and South-West Asia. If the gate-way of India was successfully pierced, then the way was open to the plains of Hindusthan which has always been the largest and the most populous of the political divisions of India. The third was peninsular India south of the Narbada.

The North-Indian rivers are snow-fed from the Himalayas and have undergone immense changes in historical times. The Indus system has undergone great transformations in its upper Himalayan reaches and in the plains where the changes in the soft alluvium have been most frequent. Some rivers like Hakru have ceased to exist; others like Kurram and Saraswati are now feeble and insignificant streams. Where the rivers of the Indus debouch into the plains, there some kind of precarious agricultural life came into existence along the river banks by utilising the inundations; otherwise the Central and the Southern parts of the Punjab remained largely pastoral. The pro-

blem of the integration of the pastoral life with the advanced agriculture society of the Gangetic Sown remained unsolved and uncared for. The Indus system collected the human sediments of the waves of nomadic flood spilling over the Hindukush. The Indus basin together with the Punjab to the west of the Sutlej was just an antechamber for passage to the Gangetic Valley. Strangely, this area came to be regarded by the orthodox Hinduism of the midlands as an alien or impure cultural area. The Indus Valley and the adjacent tracts of the Punjab remained arid areas, sparsely populated by semi-nomadic pastorals, until the face of it was changed by modern irrigation towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The Vedic Rishis may never have tired of singing the praises of the mighty Indus but Indo-Aryan civilization decreed otherwise by drawing the line of civilized life to the east of the Saraswati and Sutlej, closer to the upper waters of the Jamna. Thus India's riverain civilization developed in the Gangetic plain and a second independent civilization in the deltaic parts of the eastern peninsula. The latter became the focus of the ancient civilization of the South where flourished the well-known Southern Kingdoms. Generally, the population of a small deltic area shows no tendency to spread. It lacks massiveness and strength to thrust itself upwards. Also its gaze is sea-ward and not land-ward.

In contrast to the deltaic civilization the riverain civilization of the North rose to great heights of achievements and splendour. Successive attempts were made to build around it a universal State embracing the whole of India. This attempted unification from the North met only with a partial success even though the balance of forces favouring unification lay in the North. The North had an inadequate appreciation of the geographical character of peninsular India and it had no sea sense. At no time did a northern land power solve the problem of maintaining effective lines of land communications and military posts between the North and the South. The sisyphean attempts of the North in the pursuit of its ambitious task of political unification of India failed largely on this single issue of in-

ability to develop successful lines of communication by sea, water transport or by land.

Peninsular India brings home that India faces the Indian Ocean and has an extensive coastline. The sea, however, exercised a negligible influence in welding the South and the North of India. Transportation by sea, except in the coastal areas round the southernmost tip of India, was practically negligible. Further with the exception of Ceylon there are no islands dotted along the coastline. The peninsula is not deeply indented and there are no inland seas. From the sea there are no routes of inland navigation. Hence the absence of water-way communication from the peninsular area piercing the northern plains.

Irrigation system was developed very early in the North as well as in deltaic areas but its continuous progress appears to have been arrested. There is little evidence to show that advancements in methods of flood control and hydraulic engineering were progressively achieved. There has always been a limited extent of transportation on the great northern Indian rivers but in the absence of network of canals, transportation and communication were insufficient to weld together large areas under a central administration.

A brief delineation of the contour lines of land communication will indicate the nuclear areas of political power which have persisted for long in Indian history. The Mauryan Empire understood the importance of communications under a centralised empire. The imperial highway from Pataliputra to Taxila connected the Central Asian routes through the Hindukush. A concomitant to the rise of a centralised empire in the north was the revival of the trunk communications from east to west. This happened under the rule of Sher Shah Suri and of the Moghuls and in the nineteenth century under the British. In the opposite direction, that is from Central Asia to India, the traditional route crossed the Indus at Attock, hugged on to the submontaneous regions to the north, and, after intersecting the five rivers of the Punjab, the route converged

to Delhi. The Central and Southern regions of the Punjab were arid areas and attracted fewer adventurers, and if any one entered through the Gomal Pass, then the Indus was crossed at Dera Ghazi Khan and through Harappa the road to Delhi was joined at Kurukshetra.

There was another route from the midlands of the North to the western sea-board whose ports connected with the outside world. This route manifested itself from the Buddhistic times. Originating from Behar it passed through Allahabad and then to Bhilsa and Ujjain, both now in Madhya Bharat. After crossing the Vindhyas, it followed closely the bank of the Narbada to its mouth at Broach, the port of which was known on the ancient maps as Barygaza.

Yet, a third and an important route was from the Malwa Plateau to the Deccan. This was an easy line of communication for migratory movements from the midlands to peninsular India. It is not without significance that the Deccan lava is spread over the Malwa Plateau. The traditional route from the North to the Deccan followed the lava belt of the Southern tableland and very early it was used by the cultural missionary from the North, to be subsequently followed by military conquerors. The Aryans, the Moslems and the Moghuls found lodgements in the Deccan lava area where they reproduced the conflicting patterns of the North. One consequence of pursuing the easy line of communication to the South was that the area known as Gondwana remained isolated till recent times.

These three trends persisted in the Moslem and Moghul periods. When power was organized on Delhi-Agra axis, the movement of Islam to Deccan was through the lava area. Gujerat was reached from Delhi through the Aravalli gap ; the same route is closely followed by the railway line from Ajmer to Ahmedabad. From the west coast of India the main line of communication lay through Khandesh territory from whence the Narbada was crossed and the Malwa region was entered near Mandu. The Moghul highway then lay through Ujjain, Sarangpur, Narwar, Dholpur and Agra. This was the route taken by the first Jesuit Mission under Father Monserrate to Akbar's Court at Fatehpur Sikri in 1580 A.D.

Such was the partial development of lines of communication having regard to the basic geographical needs of the country. History had to wait till the eighteenth century when Britain successfully demonstrated that it was possible to unite India starting from the peninsular South. British power, using the Deccan tableland as a base, penetrated into the Gangetic plain from the coastal areas, thus reversing the long established tradition of the North where power had first to be organized in the North-West and then advance eastwards. Power organized on the Delhi-Agra axis fanned outwards whereas power organized on sea communications fanned inland. Later on when India was closely knit by modern communications, the age-long difficulty experienced in advancing to peninsular South by land communications was finally overcome.

II

Political and military organizations require communications but not so the drift of population. It would be reasonable to expect that the densely populated areas of the Gangetic basin would have played a preponderating role in the physical unification of the South. The northern regions had space, population and elements of higher civilization, and these in combination should have united India into one organic pattern. Why did not this happen? A categorical answer may not be easy as no set explanation can wholly explain the complex forces of Indian history. There are however two persistent trends in the political geography of India which have an interpretative bearing on this question. Firstly, the axis of the movement of North-Indian civilization and the population spread lay from West to East; it is difficult to establish the contrary principle that it lay from North to South. The movement of population was lateral and not vertical. Such a movement exerted little pressure on even the midriff of the continent, let alone the more distant South.

As civilization developed in the North, it fell into three separate segments. In the Punjab and the Indus Valley, Indian civilization had resigned itself, which it should never have done, to the fate of yielding substantial ground, cul-

turally and politically, to the nomads. This area became a very important marchland between Central Asia and the seat of the hard core of Indian civilization which was located in the mid-land portions of the North. On its progress towards the east, Indian civilization lost considerable momentum due to the emergence in the very early times of Buddhism and Jainism — both dissentients from the Hinduism of the midland. The eastern parts of India were in cultural content incompletely flooded. Hindu culture had not sufficient strength to absorb the tribal elements which it encountered in the higher reaches of the Bengal plains. More significantly, at the peripheral regions of the east, Hinduism failed to confer a protective cultural armour on the local population. In consequence, Islam, long after, was able to penetrate in depth in this outlying area, whereas in the vast intervening regions Islam was unable to make any impression on the Hindu masses in spite of the advantage Islam derived from its political ascendancy for many centuries. The loss of vigour in the eastward march of cultural Hinduism towards the geographical frontiers of India may be safely presumed.

The early manifestations of these three divisions are today vividly illustrated on a map of India showing communal concentrations. The northwest region is Islamic, the midland and the eastern portion are predominantly Hindu, and at the eastern extremity Islam, tribalism and Hinduism jostle in a confused medley.

The central or the midland of the north, known as the Aryavarta — the sacred land of the Indo-Aryan — was traditionally described as lying between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas. By destiny it was the key area for political centralization and for economic power; by fulfilment, its history is a tragedy of partial successes and of partial failures. There was no doubt that from it emanated a great cultural radiation, the rays of which impinged in different directions on all parts of India, but in relation to the unification of India, this alone was not sufficient. The midland weakened its western and eastern flanks. As a compensation it should have utilized the resources of the Narbada Valley and the Deccan tableland, if not the southernmost

part of peninsular India. Before disturbances set in in the northern plains, Indian civilization had a thousand years of peaceful evolution and had built up a stable secular society. It had dynamism, strength and viability to leap across the puny Vindhyas and spread over in strength into the Central Indian hills and jungles, subduing the land for agriculture and assimilating culturally into the fold of Hindu civilization the peoples of the forests. Instead, for some reasons not yet apparent, this great key area of the North chose to be the central but the fragmented part of the vast northern space setting a limit to its expansion up to the Vindhyan barrier. In the journey to the Deccan tableland the movement from it followed not the path of the adventurous pioneer but of an easygoing wanderer. The weight of political authority was permanently placed in the North, and the partial utilization of this advantageous position gave a wrong turn to the working of the demographic forces from the earliest times. In consequence we witness even today the existence of tribal people in the confused jungles and hills of Central India and of the still continuing process of the displacement of the tribal languages by the dominant Aryan languages.

Several reasons may be attributed to account for the ineffective functioning of the midland region of the North. There was India's disinclination to adopt a pragmatic political philosophy to deal with the recurrent invasions of the Central Asian nomads and adventurous intruders. India has no internal barriers to impede the movement of men, thought and ideas; the real barriers are her own outer geographical framework of the Sea and the mountains. Inside India there was no possibility of erecting any real barrier between the nomads and the Indian society. If there was no active policy to prevent the nomads from entering India, then it was necessary to adopt a vigorous political attitude towards the intrusive presence of the nomads within India. Isolationism and exclusiveness were hardly the answer; in the long run they are dangerous weapons as they injure the body-politic of the assaulted higher society. Eschewing the political solution of the problems of the nomads, India turned the nomads over to

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rians who came from the northwest regions nor the dissolution of the centralized empires which were located within the heart of the region. The Indian world outside Aryavarta excited no interest, not even its contiguous parts; the people of the peninsular South were as distant and strangers as the foreigners outside India.

Then again Indian temperament is not favourable to the emergence of an Indian Caesar. No great organizer arose in the North who set out to unify the whole country by drastic means. Unification by crude use of force was not an easy matter. The South was not inhabited by uncivilized tribes. Peninsular India had already reached a high degree of civilization ante-dating the rise of the North Indian Aryan civilization. Any attempted unification by strong and vigorous measures should have been with circumspection and with political insight. No North Indian organizer could have afforded to imitate, even if he wished, Shih-huang-ti who in 214 B.C. sent an expeditionary force to "Sinicize" the southern part of China up to Canton. This Emperor rounded up the vagrants from the North and Central China to populate the territories from the Long estuary to Canton. In this method of colonization the Chinese had long before anticipated the Europeans who also began to populate vacant spaces, which they had discovered, by convicts.

The Indo-Aryan civilization of the Aryavarta would have been cut off from the outside world but for the balancing role played by peninsular South which for long stretches of periods was not even in political union with the North. The people of peninsular India promoted oceanic voyages and established contacts with India's neighbours. Thus India's culture spread far beyond the confines of Aryavarta. This balancing factor of peninsular India is a permanent feature of Indian geo-politics.

III

It may appear unfair to lay all blame on a geographical region of India and charge it with failure for not fulfilling that which we have assumed to be its manifest destiny. As

a slow moving and slow grinding machinery under the care of her socio-religious system. The working of this absorption-sponge of Hinduism must have expanded a great amount of internal energy and since the process of absorbing the foreigners was spread over for more than a thousand years, we must expect the weakening rather than strengthening of the process of internal political consolidation.

The enervating and the debilitating effects of climate as a factor in weakening the energy of a dominant minority may easily be over-exaggerated. Theories based on climatic factors may have some application to the people of the cold climate, more particularly in the industrial phase of the European civilization. But their application to the ancient agricultural empires are wide of the mark, for there is sufficient justification to assume that the energy-content of the people who developed riverain civilizations was sufficient to achieve great many things within the competence of the then state of their civilization. Their technological equipment may be poor, judged by the present-day requirements, but the mind and spirit of man had soared great heights assaulting even the ramparts of Infinity. It is not to the climate factor but to the somewhat peculiar conditions of the Indian society and its deep internal stratification that we may look for our next reason.

Hindu society was securely based on caste stratification but it purchased security at the great cost of depriving itself of initiative and restlessness. It became one of the most sedentary and static populations of the world. This was an undesirable development for a very highly civilized society of Antiquity. Small colonies of sedentary people became virtually the slaves of the energetic nomads, but it was unusual to have had a high concentration of sedentary population in one area. So sedentary was the North Indian population that it had no traditions of any internal migration. Even the pounding attacks delivered by Islam resulted in some scattering of the Hindu castes from the Gangetic doaba to the eastern and central regions of India. Otherwise the Aryavarta of the past was a big inland lake of static humanity; nothing moved it, neither the barba-

has often shifted her capital from North to South. As far back as the fourth century A.D. Nanking in the lower Yangtze basin became the capital when the northern areas were under the barbarians. Since then the capital has been shifted on several ocassions, the last being in 1950 A.D.

On the Indo-Gangetic plain on a west to east axis, the shock of the nomadic attacks was something like lightning forks. There was no hard media to penetrate but it did not mean that the Gangetic plain should not have provided itself with some underpinning. Nature itself had provided the Gangetic plain with large contiguous territories in the central parts and in the peninsular South as a natural fortress. An extreme instance of the failure to make use of a rallying area is that incident in the thirteenth century when Mohamed Bhaktiyar Khilji rode in advance of a small army with only eighteen horses and subverted the Hindu Kingdom of Bengal which from that time till the Battle of Plassey was ruled as a province of some ruler in Delhi. If there was a second key area from which forces could have rallied, Bengal or any other part might have had another tale to tell.

The vast spaces of India and China presented from the beginning of their civilized existence a challenge for political unification and the integration of their respective societies. In a pre-industrial and commercial age of their agricultural civilization, regionalism was an inevitable feature of the agricultural economy. In thousands upon thousands of villages were embosomed the minuscule of national life. Urban centres were comparatively few and production and distribution were highly decentralized. A certain degree of fragmentation of territorial units and wide range of diversities in national life and society were very natural. A high degree of centralisation was impossible to attain without aids which simply were not there in the earlier phases of every civilization the world over. A device like the key economic area, in the particular context and course of the national history, was a convenient aid for the political unification of the country. When the unity of the northern area of the Yellow River basin crumbled after the

a corrective to such an assumption we may examine certain factors which have dominantly persisted towards unification. In selecting a few of them, some bias may have to be exercised, for they must have affiliation to physical geography. These indices may be: (a) the conflict between the Steppe and the Sown and its effect on internal conditions of India and China, (b) the establishment of some form of institutionalised bureaucratism, (c) transportation and communication including the development of hydraulic engineering, and (d) common language and culture.

Earlier we have examined the conflict between the Steppe and the Sown. How it affected the internal conditions of India and China remains to be assessed. Broadly this question has two counterparts though they shade into each other. One is the effect on the internal political divisions or fragmentation of territorial units. The other is the location of a key economic area, a term used in a broad sense to include an area of agriculture and manpower resources which gives enough power to dominate and control the rest of the country.

To withstand the weight of attack of the nomads the political structure must have had cushioning to take off the weight as well as some underpinning. Once the nomads entered into China or India they could not be held back by any artificial barrier, but the nomadic movement did set in motion other movements territorially to the geographical peripheral regions; in China, from North to South, in India mostly from the Punjab to Bengal. In Chinese history we see further trends developed which we do not see in Indian history. Three such are of significance in Chinese history. Chinese political experience realised that the southern regions of China, though not the seat of the original Chinese culture, could be turned into a natural fortress impregnable to attack by the advancing horse-riding hordes from the Steppe. China realised defence in depth and utilized her space in times of adversity in her fight against the invaders. Secondly, the Yangtze Valley was developed into a key economic area to maintain independent centralization when the Yellow River basin was temporarily lost to an alien authority. Thirdly, China

dissolutions of dynastic rule. A stable bureaucratic structure made it feasible and practicable to administer territorial units under the direct authority of the central government. After making allowance for the working of the centrifugal forces till the twelfth century, the Chinese pattern of administration settled down in favour of directly administered units from the centre, and thus there was no room for territorial fragmentation by subordinates exercising varying degrees of sovereign authority.

India had no such continuity. This institutional idea did not develop in India beyond initial stages. The administrative machinery under the Mauryan rule appears to have broken up and not reassembled again in any recognisable form. We are unable to trace at least in outline a going concern which could have been taken over by a succeeding authority either local or foreign. Hindu India did certainly contribute ideas and doctrines, forms and symbols, but not any continuous frame-work of organization. This is clear from the difficulties which the early Muslim rulers in Northern India encountered. They had to hold down a rebellious and refractory agricultural population over whom they ruled as a dominant minority, but they had no large-scale apparatus of administration at their disposal as a going concern. In developing their feudal system the Muslim rulers imported into India certain ideas of primitive Islam from Arabia and before the Moghul power was established Islam had not found an answer to centralization over the northern plains. In fact fragmentation increased over the northern and central parts of India.

The Moghuls did better. Akbar's genius had perceived that a stable administration by a foreign agency rested on a sound treasury and a contented peasantry. His plan was to govern through what may be described as a system of district collectors. His successors failed to develop his great idea. Foolishly they handed over the peasantry to the rapacious revenue farmers and intermediaries at whose hands they suffered unheard of miseries. His successors fell back upon the feudal system of jagirs. The situation demanded not the increase of the intermediaries but the exercise of power directly under the authority of the cen-

Han rulers, the Central regions of the Yangtze Valley attained enough economic power and viability to assume an independent centralisation. For nearly seven or eight centuries the centripetal and centrifugal forces operated as a see-saw and in this process North and South China were forced to find a balance and equilibrium. China underwent internal partition at least on four different occasions till all splintering within it came to an end, and that was about the twelfth century. Such has been the persistent tradition to unify in spite of vastness of territory and regional diversities.

The fixation and stabilisation of territorial frame-work within vast spaces and the control of tendencies to excessive fragmentation are still passive factors. The active form is that which assumes the shape of a powerful institutional organization capable of surviving through periods of turmoil and carrying over from dynasty to dynasty, from one epoch to another. This is the running thread of unity, whatever may be the catastrophical changes in the fortunes of the nation. It is here that China made a great discovery and assured to herself a continuity of cultural life and tradition for nearly two thousand years. Chinese genius understood and discovered that centralized state power with potentialities to break up any possible coalition of feudal lords and with capacity to guard the frontiers and carry on large public work projects had to depend on a competent and learned civil service the recruitment to which should have nothing to do with birth. To this conception was wedded the Confucian classical thought and this alliance worked a miracle for China. "The carriere ouverte aux talent was a Han discovery.' The emergence of a Central bureaucracy, learned and loyal to the State, prevented the establishment of feudal families and effectively frustrated the ambitions of revolting servants of State by converting their offices into hereditary rulerships, such as happened with the Carolingian Counts in medieval Europe or the Muslim and Mahratta 'war lords' following the collapse of the Moghuls in the eighteenth century India. The feudal bureaucratic system continued its course unaffected by the disappearance, at the top, of authority by frequent

way of illustration a quotation may be given from a Chinese work of the sixth century A.D. giving a glimpse of early irrigation and transportation system.

> "From Shanyang to the Yangtse River, the water surface of the canal was forty paces wide. Roads were constructed along both banks and planted with elms and willows. For every 2,000 li from eastern capital (Loyang) to Chiangtu (modern Yangchow), shadows of trees overlapped each other. An imperial resting place was built between every two post stations, and from the capital of Chhang-an to Chiangtu there were more than 40 such pavilions."

As culture and writing developed in China, the written characters became universal; the existence of dialects and mutually incomprehensible forms of speech ceased to be an impediment. In such a case the tendency to unity must dominate. Moreover paper was invented as early as the first century A.D. and China led the way for the civilized world by the development of printing. Confucian classics appeared in wood blocks from about 930 A.D. leading to wider diffusion of books and consequent spread of learning throughout the country—a fact of tremendous significance in the cultural unification of China.

IV

Northern Indian civilization did not spread as a result of political unification by the North; or by population movement and migration or by conquerors imposing their language and culture. Southwards, it spread by cultural drift. The phenomenon of the cultural assimilation of the South by the North is illustrated by an excellent dictum of the American anthropologist Franz Boas:

> "A people may remain constant in type and language and change in culture; that it may remain constant in type but change in language; or that it may remain constant in language and change in type and culture."

tralised empire. Islamic tradition in India created an aristocracy, not of wealth but of office. This left no room for carry-over of any tradition in administration. Akbar alone had seen as did the French Kings of the Grand Monarchy that every absolutist state needs the services of the holder of an office as its skilled and subtle instrument for administration. "Know," said the Scotsman Law in the beginning of the eighteenth century, "that this kingdom of France is governed by thirty Intendants." The British who followed the Moghuls had a clearer conception of the groundwork of organization for a country of India's size and they governed two-thirds of India through two-hundred and fifty district officers, and in the remaining one-third through hereditary executives represented by Princely India. Institutional organization of government as a means of promoting unity was very much a late-comer to India.

Chinese feudal bureaucratic society came to rest on intensive agriculture requiring irrigation. Hydraulic engineering and water control became a function of State authority and this augmented the centralised State power. Political power acquired a close connection with regional geography. Unlike the Collector under the British Indian administration who had to look after the fiscal interest of the State and maintain law and order, agriculture and bureaucratic administration attained close co-ordination from the Han period onwards. Whoever might rule, the scholar-gentry had to administer the affairs of the State in his region. The administrator possessed mastery over written language and he was the repository of all technical knowledge relating to hydraulic engineering. This promoted continuity and progress of agriculture and irrigation even during the periods of fragmentation of political power and of unrest.

The magnitude of the water-way communication under such persistent efforts will be appreciated when told that China had 200,000 miles of canal system, the greater number of which was located in the Yangtse Valley. This gives a measure of the transportation and irrigation system and its bearing on the agricultural life of the community. By

the Moslem rule the North was overlaid with a thick paste of Persian culture; Sanskrit ceased to be its living language. When political India was divided into the Moslem dominated North and the Hindu South, Sanskrit remained the cultural link between them. The emergence of English under British rule as the common lingua franca re-emphasised the previously well-established principle that unity between the North and the bi-lingual South could only be maintained by a language culturally so dominant that it is the highest vehicle for thought and culture.

One has to take a text book of Indian History to see how the political dichotomy between the North and the South is laid bare. The history of the North and the South is unintelligently divided into two separate worlds of kings, dynasties and chronicles. A point which has received little attention is the divergent historical experiences of the two regions and their imprint on the minds of the people.

Nature designed Peninsular South—the bastion of the North. Unaided by South, the North was unable to accomplish its historic role of meeting the challenge of the open spaces and of the barbarians. The situation worsened when a weak and politically divided North faced Islam in the twelfth century. The North alone had not the strength nor the defence in depth to deal with the Islamic onslaught. Only with the moral resources of the country as a whole could India have confronted the Turkish marauders from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. The impact of Islam shattered the entire face of North India.

That India had to confront the world-wide movement of primitive Islam was not something peculiar to her. She occupied an intermediate position between China and the Mediterranean world. The Mediterranean became the moat between the Saracens and the Christians when Islam in less than half a century overran the Roman world in Asia and North Africa. It is not the primitive Arabian Islam but the Central Asian Islamised Turks who [illegible] ed India [illegible]
can [illegible]
and [illegible] China was replenished at in-

The physical type of the Aryan speaking people was submerged in the somatic character of the indigene. The lasting gift bequeathed by the Aryan speaking people of the North was neither a higher material culture nor a superior physical type but a more excellent language and the mentality which generated it.

It is not therefore the demographic factors or the political history but the linguistic history of India to which we have to turn our attention to understand how cultural unity was established between the North and the South. There is a complete linguistic break between what is termed the Aryan languages of the North and of the Deccan lava and the agglutinative languages of the Dravida group. This major linguistic division should have proved a formidable barrier hindering the unity of civilization of the entire sub-continent and should have set up wide cultural differences such as the Slavic, Teutonic and the Romance languages have done in Europe. Fortunately for India it has not happened and is a fascinating chapter in the linguistic history of India.*

The Dravida languages represented a very high stage of development in the evolution of human speech but their role was confined to familial and social purposes. The pride of place and primacy was given to the more dominant Sanskrit. The general tendency amongst languages appears to be for the easiest and the socially more useful to supplant the more difficult or the less useful. The Dravida speaking people of the South met the most challenging of all cultural problems by choosing to be bi-lingual.

The spread of Sanskrit as the vehicle of a superior culture is a primary contributory factor towards the unity of India. This aspect of the unification of India by a dominant language is by no means a novel or a fanciful view; it is rooted in the peculiarities of Indian history. Under

*Toynbee in his 'A Study of History'—Vol. IX, pages 79-80 and footnote 3 to page 80 makes some very interesting observations on what he calls the 'irrepressible vitality' of 'this ever-green Sanskrit language' and literature and the allegiance it captured of the people speaking its derivative languages.

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tervals by small streams of migration from Turkistan. 'Islam in China had to conform to Chinese notions of the place of religion in the State." The Chinese Moslem communities were politically assimilated without losing their cultural identity. The Christian peoples of the West fought for centuries the politics of Islam and, under the adversity of Islamic attack, Western Christendom attained a certain common European outlook and later emerged, in Western Europe, into national societies.

It was a politically feeble and disunited northern India which confronted the politics of Central Asian Islam. Northern Hinduism had to fall back, for overthrowing the political dominance of Islam, on a long process of attrition in time and in numbers. The politics of Indian Islam responded to this challenge by fortifying the Moslem religion with the culture of Persian language and equipping itself with a strong protective cultural armour against the insidious inroads of dominant Hinduism. It is true a kind of synthesis of culture took place; the so-called composite culture—an imperfect blend of Hinduism and Islam—somewhat narrowly restricted to political and social purposes. Islam stubbornly remained an unassimilable force.

There ensued for long an incessant duel between Hindu and Islamic minds. Loss of political freedom apart, the Hindu soul was badly seared; there was obvious cultural degradation. The Hindu in mind and spirit had to renew himself if he had to survive. Hindu revivalism in the North expressed itself largely in the Bhakti cult and religious emotionalism to give strength and sustenance to a withering soul. It is very significant that all movements of Revivalism and Renaissance in the Islamic period and even in the 19th century were confined to the North with little application to or influence on the South. We have yet no clear idea of the profound effect of the alien impacts on the structure of Indian society Certain it is that the glorious mansion of Hinduism in the days of its pristine glory was forced to admit many socially undesirable tenants. The North has no respite from the process of absorption and the consequential social adjustments.

During these periods of trials and tribulations in the North, the South remained culturally most stable. There was no inner conflict in the mind of the Southerner for the northern conflict had little repercussion on the South. The South settled down to a long period of the Hindu way of life, the traditional and ancient forms of which were enforced rigorously by the Brahminical hierarchy with all the authority and prestige of the ancient lawgivers of the Aryan North. The South was able to retain a mature and poised mind, able to assess the fundamentals of spiritual and human problems with rationality and without any frustration. Elsewhere, wherever the conflict between Hinduism and the alien forces was intense, the resulting clash of culture and the contact of races developed a split personality.

V

This then is the final summing up of India's long and determined quest for unity. The physical and population differences between the North and the South did not lead to a major break in the social and cultural continuity of the two regions. Within the framework of a universal civilization, shaped and conditioned by history and geography, there came into existence from very early times two foci of culture in India. The North attempted but failed to unite the South; the South by itself had not the resources to unite with the North. North and South were never divided on a mutually antagonistic basis. On the other hand, the cultural life of North and South developed on a co-ordinated existence, and jointly—never separately but always in unison—they advanced the fundamental unity of India.

The unity of India is a passionate theme. The disunity of India was the standard imperialist argument against the nationalist claim for a united India. It suited the imperialists to deny the unity of a country over which they held dominance. The theorists of the Austrian empire were wont to prove that Italy was a geographical expression; the Englishman, Sir John Seeley, asserted "that India is not a political name but only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa." Such a theme was naturally repudiated

by an exposition of the fundamental unity of India's culture and civilization amidst its prolific diversities. The working of the historical forces in the last one hundred years has demonstrated that the political and economic unity of India is natural because it is 'in response to its geography.' Aided by Western Science, these forces in the course of transformation of Indian society have applied correctives, removed obstacles and facilitated unification. Of these five stand out in prominence. Firstly, distance has been conquered by the network of railways, telecommunication system and aviation. Physically, India has been knit so closely that no soldier or politician or administrator would say that the physical character of the country makes it hard to hold or govern it. With the withdrawal of Britain's imperial rule over India, the political rule of the subordinate sovereign authorities came to an end. The people of these areas joining hands with the people of the rest of India made a silent revolution by wiping out in an incredibly short time the age-long curse of territorial fragmentation. Thirdly, India possesses one of the finest administrative machinery in the world, and its defence services have a record of magnificent services of which any country may be proud. Fourthly, those areas in the North, long lost to Central Asian Islam, seceded from India by agreement when it was realised that it was not possible to maintain national unity over them. Fifthly, Indian society is no longer continental. It is rapidly being fused into a cohesive national body. Nationalism as a vital force is the basis of Indian unity. Secular nationalism based on democracy is the surest guarantee for holding together the elements which go to make India a great nation.

"India,' wrote Mr. Nehru, "was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously." There are three such writings of the past which continue to have a bearing on India's unity. The first of these is the national language. India's past has shown that what promotes powerful unity is the acceptance of a language of such a dominant character as to meet her highest

cultural requirements. The position in this respect has not changed during the last two thousand five hundred years. The regional languages have not hitherto promoted group rivalries. In Europe language in association with ethnical and racial groups has led to explosive nationalism. India fortunately has no racial problem. The national language and the cultural problems associated with it will have to be handled with understanding, sanity and maturity.

The partial functioning of the demographic factors has left large islands of primitive people in the north-eastern, central and southern parts of India. The assimilation of these elements into the present-day democratic society is a problem of importance, and this legacy of the past must be handled with care and understanding.

Thirdly, the role of peninsular India must be better understood; more so with the amputation of the Islamic limbs in the North. The peninsular part in the past orientated India's gaze to the world beyond the shores of her seas. That period has been one of the greatest epochs in the history of India. To quote a recent geographical authority:

> "How false is Lyde's still current concept of an almost solely inward looking India, with its sea contacts with those of alien traders, may be seen from the fact that the decline of Sailendra was due in large part to an attack by Rajendra Chola II (1012-44); the Cholas were driven out after a century of intermittent war but in the 13th century a disastrous expedition against Ceylon fatally weakened the power of Shri Vijaya. These armadas presupposed high standards not only in navigation and seamanship, but in naval organisation on both sides of the 1,200-mile wide waters between Coromandel and Sumatra. Certainly no European power of the day would have dreamt of such oceanic adventure; only the Viking voyages are as impressive, while the Crusading fleets were in comparison mere

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> coastal forays. On the terraces of Borobudur, the carved ships of Shri Vijaya still sail, immobile and endlessly, over their seas of stone."

The peninsular regions remind India that her interests are oceanic. The sea lanes are linked with the maze of internal transportation system of modern India which handles the vast bulk of sea-borne trade vital to her economic life. India's vision should not stop at the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean. India has to be intensely curious of the happenings beyond her own world. An exterior conception is always essential for the maintenance of peaceful international relations.